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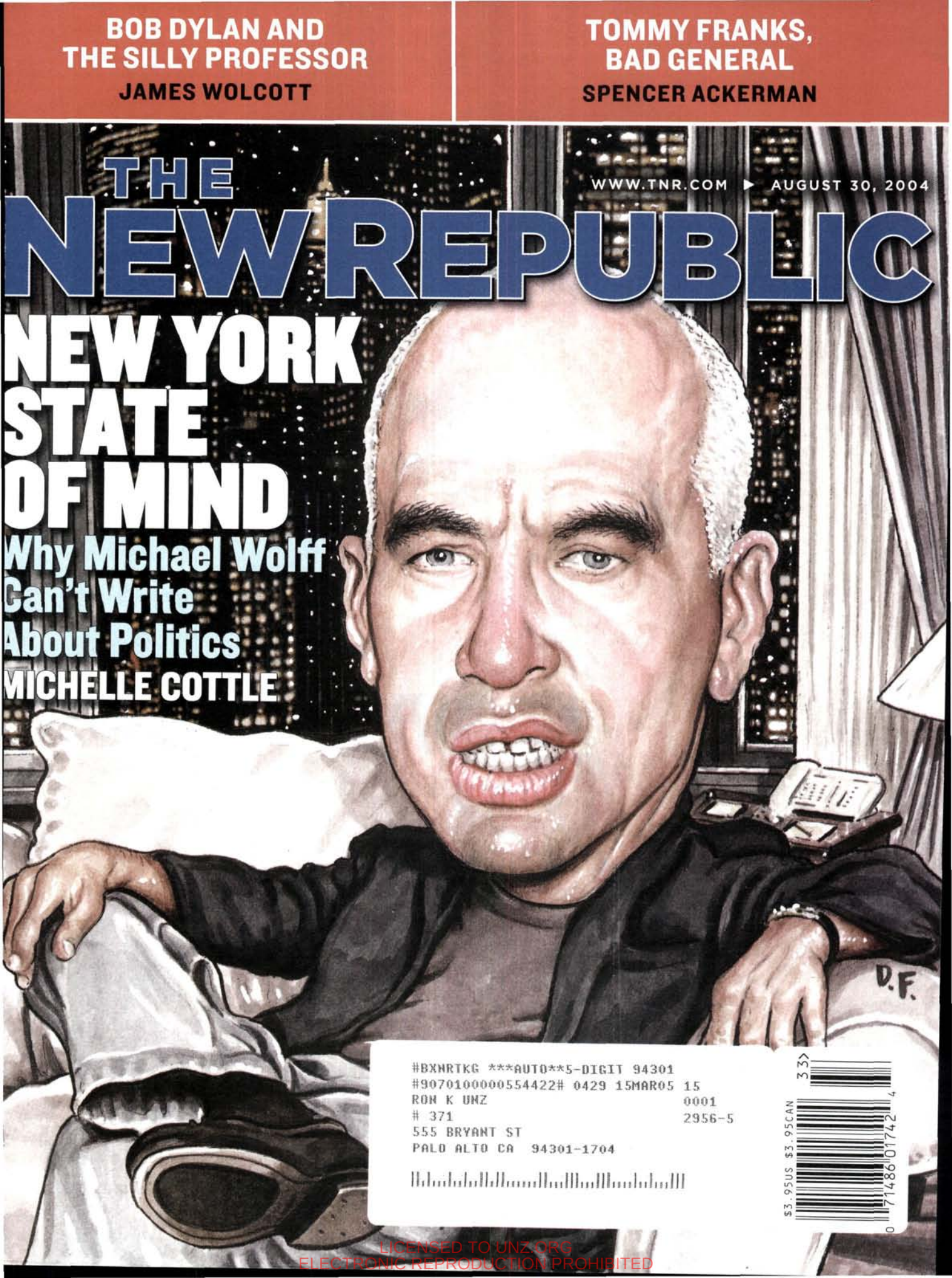
NEW YORK STATE OF MIND

Why Michael Wolff Can't Write About Politics

MICHELLE COTTLE



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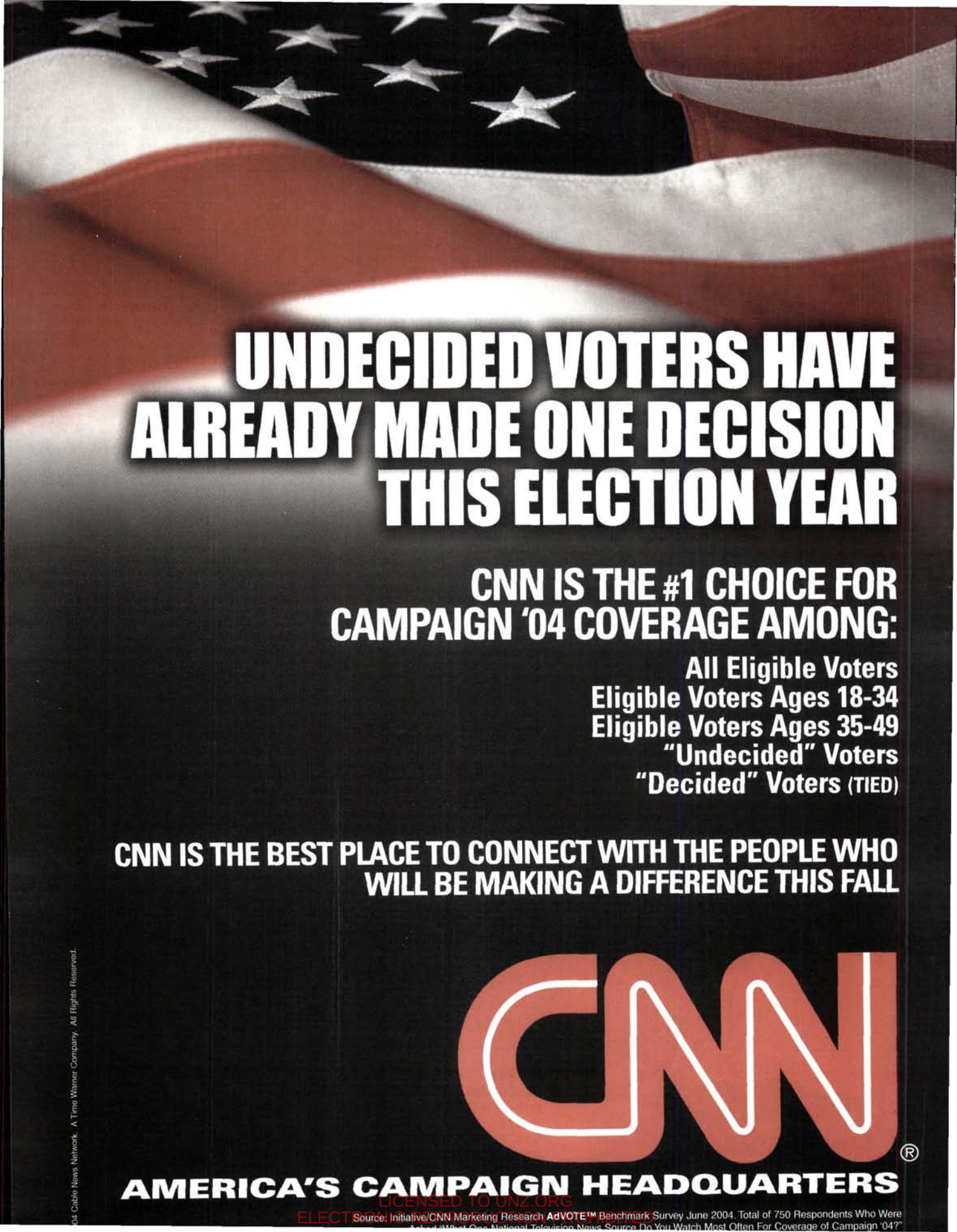
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A JOURNAL OF POLITICS AND THE ARTS

AUGUST 30, 2004 WASHINGTON, D.C. ISSUE 4,676 VOLUME 231

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COVER ILLUSTRATION BY *Drew Friedman*

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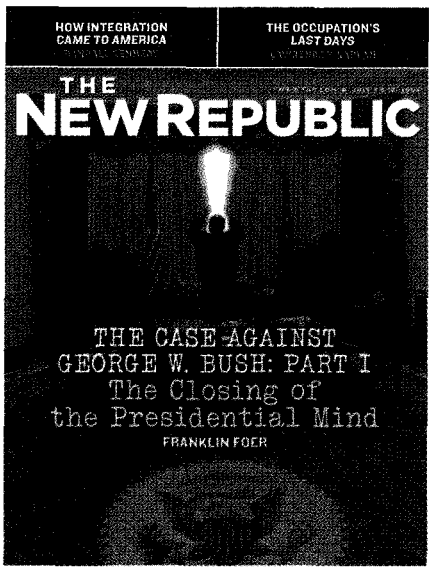
CORRESPONDENCE

THE TRUTH ABOUT TRUTH

FRANKLIN FOER GETS CLOSE TO the heart of what presidential campaigns are about, though perhaps not in the way that he intends ("Closing of the Presidential Mind," July 5 & 12). Foer chastises the Bush administration's disdain for expertise. In some instances, this critique is quite right. But it's a mistake to report on one battle while not covering the war. Foer doesn't think we're actually in a new class war, because "the term 'New Class' has faded from intellectual fashion." Precisely. It has faded from intellectual fashion because the New Class has won such dominance in our culture and in the bureaucracy. But that has triggered a war of protest by those opposed to the new elite. It is a war between experts and voters. Note that Foer says it's a war between experts and "policymakers," which ignores the fact that policymakers are elected officials. They are accountable to the voters in ways that experts are not. Further, the *values* of policymakers are revealed in political campaigns. Experts have values, too, often admirable ones, but those values escape both visibility and accountability. Expert-bashing is simply a way of positioning oneself in the new class war. If ignoring all experts leads to bad policy decisions, the voters will take care of that, too.

DAVID LEBEDOFF
Minneapolis, Minnesota

FOER IS QUITE OFF IN HIS TREATMENT of *The Public Interest*. He seems to be affected in his judgment by what neoconservatism has come to mean (a tough orientation in foreign policy) rather than by what neoconservatism actually was as it emerged in the late '60s, when it dealt entirely with domestic social policy and when its chief exponents were Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Irving Kristol, Daniel Bell, and the undersigned—three of whom were, and remained throughout, Democrats. He seems to think that an interest in the role of "culture" and "values" is in some way against "social science," when they are perfectly sound orientations in social science and, in large measure, define sociology and anthropology.


HOW INTEGRATION CAME TO AMERICA
THE OCCUPATION'S LAST DAYS
THE NEW REPUBLIC
THE CASE AGAINST GEORGE W. BUSH: PART I
The Closing of the Presidential Mind
FRANKLIN FOER

Foer writes that Moynihan and James Q. Wilson "developed the most comprehensive critique of the experts." But they were experts themselves. They did not criticize social science. They believed it should guide social policy. They criticized *inadequate* social science. What can Foer mean when he writes that they believed "social science focused too much on material 'fact' and ignored the importance of 'culture' and 'values' "? Is he limiting "social science" only to that variant that sees social problems arising from deprived economic circumstance? Even economics is not that narrow. "By the mid-'70s, *The Public Interest* crowd hadn't just grown hostile to experts. It had grown hostile to social science itself." That is nonsense. Criticism of the ideologies of some social scientists was not hostility to social science. *The Public Interest*'s contributors were themselves almost uniformly qualified social scientists, economists, sociologists, and political scientists employed in the social science departments of leading universities. One of the journal's two editors, from its founding until 2003, was a social scientist, and, for most of that period, it was the undersigned. Whatever the current administration's view of experts and social science, it has nothing to do with the policy and practice of *The Public Interest*.

NATHAN GLAZER
Former co-editor
The Public Interest
Cambridge, Massachusetts

FOER'S ARTICLE REMINDS ME OF A bit of humor regarding the creative accounting practices of many notable and now-disgraced corporations: The job search for a new comptroller for XYZ Corporation has narrowed to three candidates. They are each summoned to the office of the CEO, who asks the same basic question: "What is the sum of two plus two?" The first hopeful answers, "Four, of course," and is told that he will hear from the company soon. The second responds, "Could be twenty-two." He is complimented on the creativity of his response, but he is also told to stand by for a call. When the third prospect replies, "What do you want it to be?" the CEO shoots back, "How soon can you start?"

TOM POWERS
Rochester, New York

FRANKLIN FOER RESPONDS:
My brief history of the neoconservative attitude toward social science should have been more precise—and, if it were more precise, it would have grouped Nathan Glazer with Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Both scholars raised extremely important questions about the inadequacy of mainstream social

Continued on page 37

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Hot Button Issues

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Touch of Gray

TRB
FROM WASHINGTON

IMAGINE WHAT CONSERVATIVES would be saying if John Kerry did the things President Bush has done this year in Falluja and Najaf.

Here's a little refresher. On March 31, four American contractors are murdered in Falluja, their mutilated bodies dragged through the streets. American officials pledge to retake the city and bring the killers to justice. On April 5, 1,200 Marines encircle Falluja—digging trenches and blockading roads. After two weeks of sporadic fighting in which 36 Americans are killed, the United States halts the siege—on the condition that the militants hand over their heavy weapons. When they don't, the United States extends the cease-fire, despite insurgent attacks. Finally, on April 27, the Marines prepare for an all-out assault. U.S. planes drop flyers reading, "If you are a terrorist, beware, because your last day was yesterday." Lieutenant Karl Banke, a platoon leader with the 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, tells *The Washington Post*, "Every one of them [in his platoon] has a hunger deep down inside to finish the job. We've now shed our blood in the city. The last thing we want to do is walk away."

On April 29, the United States walks away. Taking senior military officials by surprise, the White House orders the Marines to pull back from the city, which will be patrolled by the Falluja Brigade, a roughly 1,000-man force composed of Saddam Hussein's former soldiers. The force is supposed to disarm the militants. In early June, the *Post*'s Daniel Williams slips into Falluja and reports that, while the "brigade stays outside of town in tents, [and] police cower in their patrol cars," masked militants "[pull] cars over at will." The insurgents impose sharia on the city, banning the shaving of beards and parading alcohol venders naked through the streets. Terrorists flock to Falluja—using it as a base from which to launch kidnappings and attacks. Asked on June 17 about conditions in the city, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz tells the *Post*, "We're making progress."

Meanwhile, on April 4, one day before Marines encircle Falluja, Najaf-based cleric Moqtada Al Sadr incites thousands of his followers to attack police stations and government offices throughout Iraq. Coalition Provisional Authority head Paul Bremer says, "A group of people in Najaf have crossed the line. This will not be tolerated." Over the following two months, roughly 40 American soldiers die as coalition forces sporadically battle Sadr's men. Sadr's representative in Basra offers cash rewards for the killing or capture of coalition troops and says captured female troops should be kept as slaves. Finally, in late May, the United States and Sadr agree to a cease-fire. The United States drops its demand that Sadr's militiamen disarm—asking only that they avoid openly brandishing their weapons. The United States withdraws to the outskirts of Najaf and suspends efforts to bring Sadr to court for the alleged murder of a moderate Shia cleric. Polls show that Sadr, having successfully defied the United States, is now among the most popular leaders in Iraq.

On August 5, four days after Iraqi police arrest a close Sadr ally, Sadr launches another uprising. On August 8, Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi flies into Najaf aboard a U.S. helicopter to declare that there will be "no negotiations or truce." Within two days, American and Iraqi forces have surrounded Najaf's Imam Ali Shrine, where Sadr and his men have taken refuge. On August 14, Allawi reverses himself and orders a truce to allow time for negotiations. American commanders warn journalists that the delay is allowing Sadr's forces to reinforce their positions and bring in weapons (including from militants in Falluja, who are sending supplies). Lieutenant Colonel John Mayer, commander of ground troops for the 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, tells the *Los Angeles Times*, "I hate to see us negotiate now. . . . Did he uphold his word last time?" After less than a day, negotiations break off and Iraqi government officials again say "military clearing operations" are imminent—only to reverse themselves in response to protests by Iraqi delegates at a national conference. As THE NEW REPUBLIC went to press, Sadr had snubbed a group of those delegates who had traveled to Najaf to see him, then reportedly agreed to their cease-fire proposal, although fighting continued.

If John Kerry, or Bill Clinton, had done all this, conservatives would be apoplectic. Falluja and Najaf would be exhibits A and B in their case that Democrats lack the toughness, and moral fiber, to protect America. But, since it has taken place on Bush's watch, the conservative press has been strangely muted. A number of articles in publications like *National Review Online* have, in recent months, criticized the Falluja deal. But few of them mention the name Bush. In the case of Najaf, repeated U.S. and Iraqi decisions to back down rather than storm the Imam Ali Shrine have elicited even less attention on the right. Perhaps conservatives have been too busy taking Kerry to task for proposing a more "sensitive" war on terrorism.

And that, ultimately, is what this is all about. By ignoring the Bush administration's repeated capitulations in the face of Islamist terrorism in Iraq, conservatives can preserve their cherished partisan categories: Kerry lacks spine; Bush doesn't blink in the face of evil. The truth is more complicated and more depressing. Having said it invaded Iraq to bring democracy, the Bush administration must now heed Iraqi public opinion. And, having said Iraq is once again sovereign, it must defer to Allawi's interim government. But, because Islamists like Sadr are vastly more popular than the United States (and more popular than Allawi, too), Bush's core principles are slamming into one another. A hard line against Islamist killers requires that we storm the Imam Ali Shrine. A commitment to democracy requires that we don't.

This is what happens when you lose the hearts and minds of a people. Because the Bush administration arrogantly refused to do what was necessary to secure—and thus rebuild—postwar Iraq, most Iraqis have turned against us. And now, America's political weakness has produced military weakness. At the end of the day, if you don't listen and you don't plan and you don't adapt, you lose your capacity to be tough. Perhaps that's what John Kerry has been trying to say.

PETER BEINART

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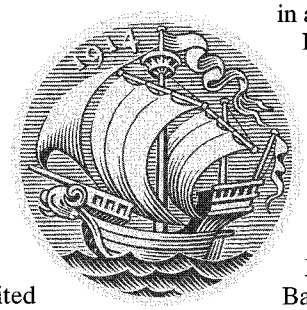
Emergency Exit

LISTENING TO JOHN KERRY'S recent evolution on Iraq makes us wistful for the John Kerry of old—the John Kerry whose position on the war was contorted to the point of near incomprehension. True, the candidate's explanation of his 2002 vote to authorize force against Iraq may have varied by campaign stop, and true, his vote against the $87 billion for reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan represented the triumph of politics over policy. But, looking forward, Kerry usually sounded a responsible note. In April, for example, Kerry said "it would be unwise beyond belief for the United States of America to leave a failed Iraq in its wake."

The good news is that Kerry's position on the war is no longer inscrutable. The bad news is that it is now indefensible. In the space of a month, the Democratic standard-bearer has gone from a pledge to bring troops home during his first *term* in the White House, to a pledge to bring troops home during his first *year* in office, to a pledge to bring them home during the first *six months* of his administration. Today, well, he just wants to bring the troops home. Hence his latest applause line: "We're going to get our troops home where they belong!"

John Kerry is no Patrick Buchanan. He claims he won't simply cut and run from Iraq. "If we demonstrate an America that has a foreign policy that is smarter, more engaged . . . and more respectful of the world," Kerry says, "we're going to bring people to our side." This, he adds, is "the way to bring our troops home." Kerry's desire to enlist our allies in Iraq is commendable. But does he honestly believe a "fresh start" will induce countries to dispatch forces to a war they opposed to begin with? India, Pakistan, Germany, France, and Russia have ruled out sending troops. If the Democratic presidential candidate knows of specific countries that would send their young to Iraq in the event of a Kerry presidency, he ought to stop waxing Nixonian and identify them.

We suspect Kerry knows no help will be forthcoming, which is what makes his pandering so cynical. But even pandering can have consequences. Given the unpalatable choice between breaking a campaign pledge in order to go it alone or simply going home, we're worried Kerry may be tempted to choose the latter. This would be a terrible mistake. There are, after all, greater sins than unilateralism. One is indifference. Another is betrayal. Were we to "bring our troops home" prior to the establishment of a stable and at least nominally democratic Iraq, we would be guilty of both.



Leaving aside the staggering moral calculation involved in abandoning a country the United States has invaded and turned inside out, how would a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq work in practical terms? It wouldn't. Iraqi security forces are still poorly trained and equipped, and, in the absence of a sizeable U.S. military presence, the war-torn state is likely to come apart at the seams. For a preview of what would follow a precipitous U.S. withdrawal, look no further than the terrorist metropolis of Falluja.

None of this, however, seems to have made an impression on Kerry, who boasts that the aim of his Iraq strategy is to "get the hand out of the pocket of the American taxpayer and get the troops home." But this is not a strategy for success—unless one defines success in terms of exit strategies. And that is the problem: Kerry has never said what he would consider an acceptable outcome in Iraq. Withdrawing American troops quickly makes sense only if one is content to leave behind a nation far different from the budding Middle Eastern democracy President Bush promised when he launched the war. Kerry may indeed be satisfied with such an outcome (at this point, Bush may be as well). He may, in fact, think a democratic Iraq unrealistic. If this is the case, he should say so. He came close once, in April, when he proclaimed that America's goal should be "a stable Iraq, not whether or not it is a full democracy." But he has never defined stability or said just how little democracy he would tolerate. Any decision to bring the troops home must be rooted in a policy for Iraq—a policy Kerry has yet to unveil.

Sure, even absent a clear plan, promises to bring soldiers home swiftly may help Kerry in Dayton and Milwaukee. But they will hurt America in Najaf and Baqubah, emboldening the Baathist and Islamist guerrillas and demoralizing the government of Iyad Allawi and whoever succeeds him in elections scheduled for January. What's more, these promises will make it harder for Kerry to insure the stable Iraq he says he wants. The purpose of exit strategies is to win elections, not wars. Kerry needs to demonstrate that he remains as committed to the second goal as he is to the first. ■

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NOTEBOOK

DICK CHENEY CAN'T REMEMBER . . . ALAN KEYES CAN'T LISTEN

SENSITIVE GUY

SETTLING INTO ATTACK-DOG MODE, Vice President Dick Cheney launched at John Kerry last week for demanding a "more sensitive war on terror." "America has been in too many wars for any of our wishes, but not a one of them was won by being sensitive," Cheney told supporters at campaign rallies in Dayton, Ohio, and Elko, Nevada.

Kerry's actual remark, delivered at a convention of minority journalists, was: "I believe I can fight a more effective, more thoughtful, more strategic, more proactive, more sensitive war on terror that reaches out to other nations and brings them to our side and lives up to American values in history." Cheney must not have been listening when his boss made a similar comment in March 2001. "Precisely because America is powerful, we must be sensitive about expressing our power and influence," President Bush said during a speech in Newport News, Virginia. "Our goal is to patiently build the momentum of freedom, not create resentment for America itself."

Or maybe Cheney had just forgotten. In fact, the vice president seems to have a very short memory. Appearing on conservative commentator Hugh Hewitt's radio program on August 14, Cheney again tweaked Kerry. "Ah, it strikes me the two words don't really go together, sensitive and war," he told Hewitt, before repeating his assertion that past U.S. wars were not won by "being sensitive." Just minutes later, however, Hewitt asked him about fighting in Najaf, Iraq, near the sacred Imam Ali Shrine. Cheney had this to say: "Well, from the standpoint of the Shrine, obviously it is a sensitive area, and we are very much aware of its sensitivity." Wait, wasn't someone just telling us America doesn't win wars by being sensitive?

HEARING IMPAIRED?

LATELY, SOME JOURNALISTS AND political commentators have argued that the press should do more fact-checking instead of presenting political disputes in a neutral he-says, she-says format. That's why, when Barack Obama recently told Alan Keyes, "Don't just go and keep on talking; you've got to do a little listening. You're not a very good listener," we felt obligated to step in. (The two challengers for Illinois' open Senate seat had run into one another during a parade on Chicago's North Side last Sunday.) Could this cruel attack on Keyes's listening skills be accurate?

Dick Cheney

A man's reputation was at stake, so we paid a visit to THE NEW REPUBLIC's research laboratories. Our technicians proposed running the Let Me Finish Test, explaining to us that, in a talk show (especially one hosted by the test subject), an above-average occurrence of this phrase generally indicates a listening imbalance of some sort. It seemed fair.

Keyes's short-lived MSNBC talk show, "Alan Keyes Is Making Sense" (there are things to say about this title—but not here, not now), provided the data. As a reference point, "Hardball" with Chris Matthews was evaluated as well. The findings: On "Hardball," between January and June of 2002, we found 14 instances of "let me finish" over the course of 129 shows, yielding a Let Me Finish ratio of 0.11 per show. On "Alan Keyes Is Making Sense," we found, during the same period, 173 instances of "let me finish" over the course of 76 shows, yielding a Let Me Finish ratio of 2.27 per show—or over 20 times the level on "Hardball."

On the face of it, our responsibility seemed clear: to report to the world that Obama was right—Keyes is not a very good listener, at least relative to Chris Matthews. Not so fast, our researchers said. On "Hardball," it was usually a guest asking to be allowed to finish, even if it was only 14 times. On Keyes's show, by contrast, it was mostly Keyes asking to be allowed to finish, almost 150 times (and, on just one episode, a full 13 times). So maybe it's not Alan Keyes who's a poor listener after all—it's everyone else.

QUESTION TIME, IT AIN'T

GEORGE W. BUSH MAY BE THE MOST inaccessible president since Franklin Roosevelt introduced regular press conferences to the White House. But who needs to take questions from reporters when you're conducting "Ask President Bush" events with supporters on the campaign trail? Last week Bush held four such forums—in Virginia, Florida, New Mexico, and Oregon—and this week, he held another one in Wisconsin. Alas, as Elisabeth Bumiller noted in *The New York Times* this week, "the questions [at these events] are not hand grenades that detonate onto the evening news." Herewith, a sample:

QUESTIONER: "I'm sixty years old, and I've voted Republican from the very first time I could vote. And I also want to say this is the very first time that I

DAVID COWLES

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have felt that God was in the White House."

QUESTIONER: "I'm wondering if I can get some inauguration tickets?"

QUESTIONER: "Can I introduce my mother and mother-in-law, who are new citizens to this country?"

OF THE MAKING OF BOOKS, THERE IS NO END

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DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

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TNR.commentary

Campaign Journal

RYAN LIZZA

KERRY'S A MENSCH; BUSH, A PUTZ: I noted awhile back that recent polling by John Green of the University of Akron showed that, despite a concerted effort, Bush has done nothing to blunt the traditional Democratic advantage among Jewish voters. In Green's survey, the sample size for Jews was very small, but a much larger poll out this week by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research confirms that Bush has made no inroads. The numbers look almost identical to what Voter News Service exit polls found in 2000, as summarized by the National Jewish Democratic Council, for whom the poll was conducted:

> [Among Jewish voters,] Senator Kerry leads President Bush by a margin of 75 percent to 22 percent. Senator Kerry's lead is as strong as [Al Gore's] in 2000. ... [R]espondents voted in 2000 for Gore over Bush by a margin of 76 percent to 21 percent. Jewish voters overwhelmingly agree with Senator Kerry on the issues. ... Even on the issues of Israel and America's war on terrorism, American Jews overwhelmingly believe Senator Kerry will do a better job, both by a margin of 66-34 percent.
>
> President Bush is deeply unpopular among American Jews. President Bush is seen as favorable by only 20 percent of respondents; a stunning 73 percent see him unfavorably. Conversely, Kerry is seen as favorable by 59 percent of the respondents, while only 27 percent view him unfavorably.

I'd say, with the exception of their efforts to woo Jews, blacks, Hispanics, and Catholics, Karl Rove and George W. Bush's strategy to bring traditionally Democratic groups into the Republican fold is going swimmingly.

MILITARY OVERSTRETCH: August 12 revealed a lot about the state of the campaign. John Kerry tried to shift the conversation to his economic plan, delivering a speech—"A Stronger America Begins at Home: The Path to Prosperity"—in California and opening a two-week emphasis on the economy. Meanwhile, the Bush campaign spent today criticizing Kerry for his recent statement about America needing to have a more "sensitive" approach to terrorism.

The dueling messages—the economy versus the war—are a reminder that, for all the recent talk that Iraq has turned into a liability for Bush and that Kerry has made great strides in how voters view his approach to terrorism, the old conventional wisdom that Kerry needs the campaign to be about the economy while Bush needs it to be about national security has returned.

The shift in emphasis by Kerry suggests his campaign realizes it may have missed an opportunity by making his convention almost entirely about national security. Kerry's aides insist that there was no post-convention bounce available to him because of the polarized electorate, but other Democrats disagree. They point out that numerous polls show there is a majority for change in America.

The most persuasive proponents of this view are Stanley Greenberg and James Carville, who recently released a post-convention memo bemoaning Kerry's missed opportunity. The duo note that "the small shift in the vote is disappointing" because "[w]e hoped the convention would have pushed up the Kerry vote at least to the proportion wanting change—and then some more, reflecting the usual unreality of many voters momentarily taken with all the excitement and hope." Furthermore:

> On personal and leadership attributes, few moved up more than a few points and some, like cares about you, remained constant. The convention did not diminish any of the negative attributes, like being too liberal, flip flopping and lack of clear ideas, and too ready to raise taxes.
>
> On the issues, the number choosing Kerry barely rose on the economy (up 1 point), education (up 2), taxes (down 2), creating jobs in America (up 2), raising middle class living standards (up 2), and energy independence (no change).

The problem? Greenberg and Carville say Kerry overdid the whole military thing:

> We think that the bounce was contained largely because the message—stronger at home and respected in the world—is defined purely by the convention's focus on strength, military, security and foreign policy. ... Kerry is even with Bush on Iraq and up only 4 points on foreign policy. While that is [an] important accomplishment, leaving the message there also leaves Kerry short of the majority that is currently possible.

Kerry worked so hard to neutralize Bush's strengths that he moved the debate completely off his own most advantageous terrain. It's no coincidence that he is now working hard to move it back.

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Urumqi Dispatch

Purple Haze

BY JOSHUA KURLANTZICK

THE GRAND HOTEL offers some of the finest accommodations in Urumqi, the frontier capital of Xinjiang, the vast western province of China bordering Central Asia. A swanky first-floor bar swarms with Chinese businessmen dressed in expensive suits, sipping Johnnie Walker. A twentieth-floor fitness club caters to Chinese yuppies trying out gleaming new Nikes but never working hard enough to sweat out their hair gel. But there is one thing the Grand Hotel doesn't offer: a view. When I got to my eighteenth-floor suite, the bellboy showed me the room's amenities—satellite television, a plethora of little liquors—and proudly pulled back the drapes so I could get a good look at downtown Urumqi, a beautiful city. Unfortunately, I could see little through the gray air. Few buildings were visible, though I knew they were there, just outside my window. The bellboy smiled. "Nice view," he said.

Sad to say, he was right. Of the several weeks I have spent in Urumqi, that day was one of the clearest. Later that afternoon, some of the smog lifted, and I could see the stunning mountains surrounding the city, a rarity. Meanwhile, on the road outside Kashgar, a city southwest of Urumqi, mines and construction outfits belched smoke into the broad desert sky, making the air a thick particulate soup; when I ran a wet cloth over my face, it turned black, as if I'd been in a West Virginia mineshaft. My driver, and everyone else in a taxi with me, incessantly coughed and spit soot and phlegm on the car floor. And Xinjiang is hardly unique. For years, Western observers and some Chinese have worried about China's enormous problems: a sclerotic economy clogged by mountains of nonperforming loans; a rapacious gerontocracy allowing its people slightly more freedom while simultaneously cracking down on groups that organize against the state. But largely ignored has been perhaps China's biggest looming disaster: The Middle Kingdom is hurtling toward environmental catastrophe—and perhaps an ensuing political upheaval.

ALREADY, MOST CHINESE cities make Los Angeles look like a Swiss village. In Beijing last week, I choked on hot, dust-filled air—a normal occurrence in summer, when plague-like sandstorms from China's expanding deserts wash over the capital. In Guiyu, a city in southern China known for its electronics-recycling industry, the *Los Angeles Times* reports that peasants work atop mountain-sized piles of toxic refuse. Even in Shanghai, one of China's most progressive cities, I have passed water systems full of trash, oil, and feces, and many days the acrid, gray air has stung my eyes. The numbers are even more depressing. Sixteen of the world's 20 most polluted cities are in China. Two-thirds of China's cities don't meet World Health Organization air-quality standards. Reports released by Chinese health experts have suggested that just living in these places is like smoking two packs of cigarettes per day and that, in some cities, 80 percent of children may suffer from lead poisoning—80 percent! Beijing's air has more carbon monoxide than Los Angeles and Tokyo combined. By 2020, 550,000 Chinese will be dying prematurely of chronic bronchitis caused by airborne pollution.

Rural areas are in trouble, too. Between 1994 and 1999, China's Gobi Desert expanded by more than 20,000 square miles, moving within 150 miles of Beijing, reducing groundwater supplies—and causing brutal dust storms that often spread over much of Asia. "No country has ever faced a potential ecological catastrophe on the scale of the dust bowl now developing in China," Lester Brown, president of the Earth Policy Institute, a leading international environmental group, has said. According to *The River Runs Black*, an outstanding new book by Elizabeth Economy, a China scholar at the Council on Foreign Relations, five of China's biggest rivers are "not suitable for human contact." China's wastewater pollution may increase as much as 290 percent by 2020.

In a country historically viewed in the West as attuned to the Earth—American acolytes of Buddhism often cite its respect for nature—how have things gone so wrong? Contrary to common belief, even traditional Confucian scholars saw nature as a force to be tamed, not preserved; and Mao famously pooh-poohed environmental problems, so Chinese leaders never built strong environmental institutions. And, over the past two decades, the country has gone through history's most rapid industrialization with virtually no controls; China's equivalent of the Environmental Protection Agency has a staff of only 300, one-fiftieth that of its American counterpart. Coal powers nearly 70 percent of Chinese industry, compared with less than 25 percent in the United States, and Chinese consumers are feverishly buying cars with lax emissions controls—the number of cars on the road is doubling every four years, creating unchecked congestion. Corrupt Communist Party officials profit from unregulated construction, China's tissue-thin legal system barely constrains developers, and the massive construction that results is destroying forests and contributing to desertification. In Kashgar, Chinese firms are madly tearing down old, eco-friendly mud-brick homes built around airy courtyards to build acres of flashy new glass and steel shopping centers. Kashgar contractors strew trash everywhere.

What's more, as unemployment has risen, Beijing has tried to keep the economy moving with a series of massive—and massively destructive—infrastructure projects, including the world's biggest dam and its longest bridge. (In 2002, state investment in the economy rose 25 percent even as foreign economists touted the liberalization of Chinese private business.) In Xinjiang, China has built an unnecessary rail-

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road across the lightly populated province, as well as an economically unviable oil pipeline.

BUT THE ECOLOGICAL destruction is spawning a grassroots environmental movement that might have a positive impact. Ecological destruction in Poland, the Soviet Union, and other countries in communist Eastern Europe helped spark political change. Economy notes how, in Krakow in the 1980s, Polish intellectuals, trade-union members, and environmentalists banded together to push the government to upgrade local factories that were heavy polluters—the same coalition of activists that later took on the state directly. In the USSR, meanwhile, huge protests developed in 1986 over a project to divert the Siberian River—a project that was causing massive pollution.

Similar things may be happening in China. Already tens of millions of farmers in the central provinces, sites of the worst desertification, stand to lose their farms. But, as the U.S. Embassy in Beijing notes in a report titled "The Grapes of Wrath in Inner Mongolia" (Inner Mongolia is a Chinese province), "China's 21st-century 'Okies' have no California to escape to." Without an unpopulated frontier for the migrants, they are coming to provincial capitals and to Beijing, where, like Poles and Russians in the '80s, they vent their anger at the government. China's Ministry of Public Security has admitted that the number of large protests in China almost tripled between 1993 and 1999 (the most recent statistics available), with many taking place in cities where workers fired from state industries are joining forces with migrating farmers who lost their fields. Similarly, recent battles between farmers and industry over water scarcity have led to large, often violent, antigovernment protests.

And, unlike religious groups like Falun Gong or small political organizations like the China Democracy Party that have challenged Beijing, the environmental movement is relatively well-organized. Though security forces harass anyone who might threaten the Communist Party, they have not cracked down as hard on the greens because, until recently, China's leadership did not consider environmental groups "political" organizations. "The environmental NGO definitely gets more space," Yi Wen, a program officer for the activist group Green River, told reporters last year. Taking advantage of this permissive attitude, more than 2,000 environmental NGOs have organized in China. These dynamic green groups, legal aid centers, and crusading media outlets have energized grassroots activism and suggested to ordinary Chinese that, ultimately, only democracy will bring down corrupt officials and solve environmental problems. Their message is getting through: According to Economy, Li Xiaoping, executive producer of "Focus," a Chinese investigative news program, says peasants now come to the "Focus" studios to beg them to investigate environmental problems caused by local officials. And one day, perhaps, a massive environmental meltdown will empower these green groups, as Chernobyl catalyzed Soviets. Maybe then I will be able to see out the window at the Grand. ■

Has America sold out the Libyans?

Pawn Shop

BY JANINE ZACHARIA

MUAMMAR QADDAFI'S VOLUNTARY disarmament could hardly have come at a better time for the Bush administration. With no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, Libya's decision late last year to hand over its centrifuges for uranium enrichment and declare its chemical agents to international inspectors breathed new life into the idea that the Iraq war would have powerful demonstration effects. Administration officials argued that Qaddafi had sacrificed his nuclear ambitions for fear he would be the next Middle Eastern dictator to be toppled, and the achievement has now become part of Bush's stump speech. "Before September the eleventh, Libya was spending millions to acquire weapons of mass destruction," Bush said at a recent Veterans of Foreign Wars convention in Cincinnati. "Today, because America and [its] allies have sent a strong and clear message, the leader of Libya has abandoned his pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and America and the world are safer." And Bush has rewarded Qaddafi handsomely—with a relaxation of sanctions, the removal of a 23-year-old travel ban, and pledges of closer ties, including a normalization of diplomatic relations.

There is little doubt that Libya's surrender of its nuclear ambitions has made the world safer. Even human rights advocates like Representative Tom Lantos encourage deeper ties with Tripoli to ensure that Libya does not resume its WMD program. "I'm strongly in favor of moving ahead with normalization. It's clearly in our national interests," Lantos told me. But, while the achievement is to be celebrated, the quick rush to reward Qaddafi, an unpredictable and vicious dictator, has cast further doubt on the White House's commitment to one of the pillars of its post–September 11 foreign policy: democratic reform in the Middle East.

BUSH HAS HARDLY been shy about touting his democratization efforts. Last November, in perhaps his most significant foreign policy speech, the president cast aside six decades of American commitment to stability in the region. Instead, he announced that democratic reform in the Arab world "must be a focus of American policy." After the speech, White House spokesman Scott McClellan described advancing freedom and democracy as "a central element of our national security strategy." And, at the June NATO summit in Turkey, a day after Iraq's new government assumed control in Baghdad,

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Bush again called for democratic change across the Middle East, urging Arab nations to "recognize the direction of the events of the day."

Yet, while Bush champions reform, Libya's massive human rights violations have not retarded Washington's drive toward normalizing relations with Tripoli. "I haven't seen the U.S. emphasize that they want to see progress on human rights," said one analyst with a leading human rights group. "They're too busy rejoicing [over] the encouraging signals on weapons." Adds one Capitol Hill lobbyist, "They're not making it the centerpiece of their discussions. The most important thing for Bush in Libya is that [Qaddafi] gave up WMD. I guess human rights were the price."

And Libya is hardly a minor human rights offender. According to Freedom House, it is among the least free countries in the world. Torture is routine. People have been held incommunicado for decades without trial and killed arbitrarily. Restrictions on press freedom in Libya "are unparalleled almost anywhere else in the world." In May, after Libyan police allegedly tortured six foreign medics, a court speedily convicted them of deliberately infecting 426 Libyan children with the HIV virus, though experts believe the children got the virus due to mistakes in Libya's atrocious health care system. The foreigners were sentenced to die. Amnesty International made its first visit to Libya in 15 years this February and then got only limited access to political prisoners. Among the detainees they did not see was Ahmed 'Abd Al Qadir Al Thulthi. Thulthi was arrested in 1986 and never tried; he subsequently disappeared, and his family has not heard from him since 1996. Most Libya observers believe Thulthi is dead.

Another Libyan man being held incommunicado is Fathi Al Jahmi, a 63-year-old democracy advocate. On March 12, President Bush publicly welcomed Jahmi's release from a 17-month detention. "It's an encouraging step toward reform in Libya," Bush said. Two weeks later, however, Jahmi, along with his wife and son, disappeared again. They are still missing. Since Bush's March remark, the White House has not publicly called for Jahmi's release. An American official says that the United States has "received assurances of his physical security." But Jahmi's family is unimpressed. "Basically, the State Department is just saying, 'We keep pushing,' but they are not telling us how," Jahmi's brother Mohammed, who lives in the United States, told me. "They assure us they are for human rights and for democracy and say these are important issues," he added. "But we also see visits by U.S. officials to Libya to strengthen relations and to push ahead with normalization while Qaddafi is still not implementing any reforms."

Indeed, human rights offenses are unlikely to reverse—or even delay—the normalization of ties. After all, American businessmen, many from the same oil companies that have lavishly funded Bush's campaigns, have flocked to Libya since the president relaxed the trade embargo in April. (Libya is estimated to have 36 billion barrels of oil reserves, valued collectively at $1 trillion.) ExxonMobil signed a deal in July with Libya's national oil firm, and ChevronTexaco has held preliminary talks with Libyan oil officials.

Economics are not the only factor prompting Washington to overlook Libya's abysmal human rights record. American officials hope to duplicate the Libya disarmament model in pariah nations like North Korea, Iran, and Syria, and do not want to appear too tough on Qaddafi. "If you really want to send a message to North Korea and Iran, you can't have Libya do all this major disarmament of their own volition and get nothing in return," the American official told me, suggesting that raising the bar would send the wrong message to other proliferators. Of course, improving U.S.-Libyan relations without putting serious pressure on Qaddafi to treat his people more humanely could set another precedent: that the United States will accept a disarmed North Korea that continues to starve its people or a disarmed Iran that continues to jail and kill its dissidents.

Now that the United States has eased travel restrictions and removed some economic sanctions, the next gift will likely be Libya's removal from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, a designation that prohibits direct U.S. assistance. American officials in favor of removing Libya stress Tripoli's acceptance of responsibility for the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, and its payment of compensation to victims' families. (Libya, however, is holding a portion of the compensation in an escrow account and has threatened to take it back unless the United States removes it from the terrorism list.) They cite Tripoli's severing of ties with Palestinian militant groups. And they believe Libya has abandoned its past support for brutal African dictators like Liberia's Charles Taylor.

But, according to the Bush administration's own democratization logic, dictatorships can't be trusted to act benignly abroad. And recent weeks have shown that Qaddafi is still dangerous. Libyan dissidents say money from the Libyan government is still routed to militants operating in Saudi Arabia. In fact, Abdurahman Alamoudi, former executive director of the American Muslim Council, last month pleaded guilty to participating in an unsuccessful plot designed by Tripoli to assassinate Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah. According to *The Washington Post*, Alamoudi's testimony revealed that, following a March 2003 conference at which Qaddafi and Abdullah had a heated exchange, Libyan officials recruited Alamoudi. They paid him $1 million to find conspirators to kill Abdullah. Although Qaddafi is not named as a planner in the testimony, he appears in the court documents as "Libyan government official #5," who met personally with Alamoudi. The United States knew of the Alamoudi plot before sanctions were eased and suggests that Libya played no part in the assassination attempt, though Alamoudi's testimony clearly contradicts this claim. When it comes to Libya, it seems, the White House is capable of all kinds of self-deception. ■

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Rome Dispatch

When in Rome

BY YASMINE ERGAS

FUNDAMENTALISTS DISREGARDING THE separation of church and state is hardly surprising, but we expect a little more from public schools. Yet, this summer, Milan's Agnesi High School for the Social Sciences seemed prepared to do just that. The school announced plans to admit 17 girls and three boys, graduates of an Islamist private school connected to a local Islamic center into a special, segregated class. Describing the proposed class, Agnesi's principal explained that teachers would teach the school's regular curriculum. But the fundamentalist students would not mingle with other students. The girls would wear chadors; classroom walls would be stripped of crucifixes; and, if the children's parents so requested, the language of instruction would be Arabic. In short, Agnesi High School would open an "Islamic track." It was not alone: Four other Muslim-only classes were also being planned in Milan.

This idea provoked outrage and was quickly quashed. The Milanese initiative, according to commentator Renzo Guolo, revealed the difficulties Italy faces in dealing with an immigrant minority that insists on "living Islam as if it were not in the West." But it also revealed Italy's own difficulties "living in the West." Because, in a sense, when Italian Muslims violate the separation of church and state, they highlight the ambiguities of Italy's relationship with the Catholic Church today.

THE INITIATIVE GREW out of extracurricular activities for Islamic youth run by an educational research center affiliated with the province of Milan. These activities had earned the local Islamist community's trust, prompting prospective students' parents to initiate a special negotiation with the center, which had, in turn, involved Agnesi. The parents had intended to send their children—especially their daughters—back to their countries of origin (most were Egyptian), enroll them in private, fundamentalist institutions, or simply keep them home. But, if their stipulations were met, they agreed to allow the children to attend public school. They demanded a separate class, although it became apparent from the descriptions the principal and others provided that the parents' and the schools' objectives contrasted sharply. From the parents' point of view, the separate class was meant to avoid the cultural contamination inherent in public education. For the educators, it was meant to mainstream students otherwise destined for marginalization.

For some, the school proposal had pragmatic appeal. Successful social regulation, author and literary theorist Umberto Eco argued in response to the Milan case, is based on the principle of negotiation. Such negotiation must deal with facts. The most salient fact, as Eco saw it, was the ultimatum launched by the students' parents. Given three equally unacceptable alternatives—we will send our children back to our own countries (which Eco saw as expulsionary), we will send them to our own schools (which he saw as ghetto-izing), or we will not allow them to study (which Eco viewed as a denial of the right to education)—the separate class represented the lesser evil.

Ultimatums, however, are the substance of hold-ups, not good faith negotiations; their acceptance indicates capitulation rather than compromise and breeds hostility instead of mutual satisfaction. Unsurprisingly, commentators lambasted the initiative. A spokesperson for the far left group Rifondazione Communista deplored the apartheid that the separate class evoked. A representative of the regionalist—and nativist—Northern League denounced it as a "dangerous step towards ... Islamization." It exposed the weakness of a state willing to divert public goods to private ends, said the president of the Italian Sociological Association. But the renowned editorialist for the leading newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, Claudio Magris, raised the most fundamental objection of all: Segregating students on the basis of faith violated non-negotiable principles of equality and "laicity"—a term meaning, roughly, nondenominationalism and secularism.

Just how important Magris considered those principles was evident in the analogy he used. "[When we are sick,] we try to evaluate whether to take a specific medication," he wrote, "but we do not take into consideration—as one of my neighbors suggested when I was a child—the idea of curing sore throats by putting a cat's tail into our mouths." Similarly, Magris implied, when the disease is fundamentalism, the cure is not religious colonization of public education.

Magris then explained his view of laicity—and why the crucifix that adorns Italian classrooms does not violate it. Laicity rests, Magris wrote, on the distinction between that which pertains to faith and that which pertains to reason—that which pertains to the Church and that which pertains to the state. Whereas compulsory veneration of the crucifix would be unacceptable, "only an obtuse mind can be scandalized by the presence of the crucifix in a school in our country because Christianity ... is part of our civilization." In fact, its mere presence on school walls "offends no one." Veneration, in other words, belongs to the sphere of faith and cannot be mandated by the state; the crucifix does not, and therefore its presence on a school wall can be.

BUT IS THE crucifix really a nonreligious symbol? Two Italian court decisions have recently said it does not belong—or, at least, should not be required—in public schools. Last October, granting an injunction for its immediate removal from a school in the

Yasmine Ergas is a lawyer based in New York City.

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southern town of Ofena, one court noted that the crucifix's presence imposed a denominational connotation on the school system. To preserve the students' peace and privacy, the mayor of Ofena immediately closed the school. He needn't have worried: Within days, the injunction had been overturned. Then, in November, in a case brought by an atheist parent, another court ruled that laws imposing the crucifix in public schools violated principles of nondiscrimination and laicity. It referred the issue to the Constitutional Court, which has yet to announce its decision.

Ratified in 1948, the Italian constitution enshrined among the nascent republic's fundamental principles the equality of all citizens, nondiscrimination on religious grounds, and freedom of worship. But it also specifically distinguished the rights of the Catholic Church from those of other faiths and explicitly incorporated the Concordat, or Lateran Pacts, into its framework. Agreed to by the Vatican and the famously irreligious Benito Mussolini to consolidate his regime, the Pacts established Catholicism as the state religion. Six decades later, they were revised. The new Concordat of 1984 made significant concessions to the Vatican, stipulating that public schools must provide religious instruction to be imparted by teachers approved by the Church. But it also repealed the norm that made Catholicism the state religion. Interpolating from the revised Concordat, the contemporaneous agreements with other religious groups, and the existing constitutional norms, in 1989 the Constitutional Court affirmed laicity as one of Italy's "supreme principles." The fate of the laws that impose the crucifix seems to have been sealed.

But was it? Commenting on the injunction in Ofena, Italian President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi declared that "the crucifix has always been considered as not only the distinctive sign of a particular religious creed but especially the symbol of the values ... at the base of our [national] identity." Ciampi cited the noted philosopher Benedetto Croce, who wrote that Christian values had become so central to contemporary Western civilization that one couldn't *not* consider oneself Christian. Many eminent politicians and intellectuals agree—both with the notion of Italy's essential Catholicism and with the redefinition of the crucifix from a symbol of religious belief to one of national identity. If the crucifix is just a variant of the national flag, they seem to imply, then its presence can offend no one.

But the crucifix is not bereft of religious significance. Surely the Church would take issue with a theory that strips the most powerful emblem of Catholicism of the message it conveys to the faithful. When the Italian parliament determined, in 1924, the required décor of Italian middle schools, it carefully listed the national flag, the crucifix, and the portrait of the king. Three separate items, each of which was presumably intended to convey a particular meaning. It is hard not to think that the crucifix embodied a declaration of religious adherence precisely because it was then, as it is today, a symbol laden with religious meaning.

The parliament of 1924 was not governed by the principles that Italy now professes. That all Italian subjects were not equal with respect to the nation's declaration of faith—that all subjects could not recognize themselves in the Catholic tradition—could be considered immaterial. The principles of nondiscrimination and laicity did not apply then. But, despite what mainstream commentators—and some of Italy's Muslim fundamentalists—seem to believe, they should today. ■

Why the king of New York media can't write about Washington.

Wolff Trapped

BY MICHELLE COTTLE

SNUFFLE. SNUFFLE. SNUFFLE. The little black nose is cold and wet on my arm. "Gracie, stop that!" media writer Michael Wolff scolds the small, spastic spaniel wriggling next to me on the sofa. Gracie tumbles to the floor, but Trixie the cat soon takes her place and delivers an exploratory head butt. "No. No. No. Come on," says an embarrassed Wolff, leaning out of his high-backed red chair and waving an arm.

Wolff and I are seated in the living room of his comfy Upper East Side home. The sixth-floor co-op is bright and airy, with buttercream walls, multiple built-ins, and proudly hung rows of black-and-white photos that Wolff has taken of his three kids. Every few minutes, our chat is interrupted by phones ringing, pets prowling, or family members popping in to introduce themselves and see how we're getting along. (Famously, thank you.) Slouched low in his seat, wearing a dark gray T-shirt, gray cotton pants, and black sneakers, the 50-year-old Wolff has an air of casual domesticity that fits perfectly into this low-key, family circus scene. But, having heard so much about the columnist's calculating nature—especially his meticulous, leave-nothing-to-chance p.r. skills—I start to feel like the picture is a little too perfect, the casualness too studied. Wolff clearly wants me

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to see what a charming, regular-guy dad he is, even as he explains what it's like to be one of the most powerful, most talked about, and most hated figures in New York media.

It's difficult for non–New Yorkers to fully grasp the Michael Wolff phenomenon. In the most literal terms, Wolff, from 1998 until he decamped for *Vanity Fair* this winter, wrote the weekly "This Media Life" column for *New York* magazine, spinning out stylish, pointed observations on everything from Viacom's power struggles to Rupert Murdoch's love life. From the start, Wolff was adamant about being neither a media reporter (working the phones isn't really his style) nor a media critic ("that dour schoolmarm figure"). Instead, he put himself at the center of the story, giving readers a first-person glimpse of the inner workings of the media biz as it happened to, and all around, him. Uninterested in the working press, Wolff's special focus (fixation, even) has always been on the power players—the moguls—most of whom he has relentlessly and repeatedly skewered, scraping away the sheen of power and money to reveal the warts, flab, and psychic scars plaguing that rarefied breed of (in Wolff's view) super-wealthy narcissists who buy, run, and ruin media companies for the gratification of their insatiable egos.

But to describe what Wolff does hardly explains what he is. With his wicked rants, Wolff swiftly emerged as the It Boy of New York media. His quick wit, dizzying writing style, and willingness to say absolutely anything about anybody made his column a must-read. Plus, he was writing (gossiping, really) about the New York media's favorite subject—the New York media—in a catty, caustic way that no one else dared. (Snarky critiques of his subjects' grooming habits are a Wolff perennial.) Love him or hate him (and many of his colleagues truly despise him), Wolff could not be ignored. And, as the columns sparked ever more buzz, the columnist became nearly ubiquitous: speaking at conferences, hosting conferences, holding forth on American media in the foreign press (the Euros absolutely adore his cheekiness), schmoozing at all the best parties, and grabbing as much airtime as possible on the chat shows. In 2002, Wolff won a National Magazine Award for commentary, followed by a second nomination in 2003 and then a second win in 2004. Meanwhile, his coverage of the media elite was elevating him to the level of bona fide big dog. (*Page Six* gossiped about him! Mort Zuckerman returned his calls!) Around New York, this status was best manifested by Wolff's securing his own table—number five—at Michael's, the Midtown eatery where everyone who's anyone in media goes to be seen having lunch. A coveted piece of real estate, table five signaled Wolff's professional dominance far more than any award.

As *New York*'s marquee name, Wolff was free to write about whatever he wanted. As Wolff defines it, media is an all-encompassing "superstructure," a refracting lens through which to examine all aspects of American culture. Increasingly over the past couple of years, he has focused this lens on national politics. In early 2003, Wolff traveled to Qatar for a brief stint as war correspondent. (There, he produced a series of columns that won him his second National Magazine Award.) As the presidential race got underway, he frequently held forth on the Democratic primaries. And, all along, the Bush administration has been a favorite whipping boy. Now, in his posh new post at *Vanity Fair*, Wolff plans to continue this political musing. His July piece for the magazine looked at the media elite's response to Abu Ghraib. For August, he wrote a profile of Democratic über-adviser Bob Shrum. And, in light of Editor Graydon Carter's antipathy toward the current administration, if George W. Bush wins reelection, Wolff will certainly be encouraged to spend the next four years making the president's life as unpleasant as possible.

So should Washington's political chieftains be concerned that the scourge of New York's mogul class—the man who claims partial credit for Michael Eisner's current job crisis—has them in his sights? Not really. Whatever his gifts in chronicling the follies and foibles of the Manhattan media elite, Wolff is neither as insightful nor as entertaining when dissecting politics. As New York journalists are the first to acknowledge, Wolff is the quintessential New York creation, fixated on culture, style, buzz, and money, money, money. (For Wolff, nothing is more erotic than a multibillionaire.) Though not of the mogul class, he arguably understands the culture and mindset in which it thrives better than almost anyone. The same cannot be said of politics, which Wolff approaches from the perspective of your garden-variety Upper East Side liberal. "I don't think he's anywhere near as sharp on politics," says one Washington press eminence (and Wolff admirer). "He's basically a conventional liberal with a Manhattan-centric view of the world." Indeed, much of what enabled him to pull back the curtain on the Manhattan media scene—his New York–centrism, his obsession with (and proximity to) the city's power players—is precisely what makes him poorly qualified to comment on much else.

BARRY DILLER, CHAIRMAN and CEO of InterActiveCorp, is on the line waxing rhapsodic about what a "damn interesting writer" Wolff is. "He has lots of ideas," growls the megamogul. "His columns are filled with ideas and concepts." Fans and detractors alike talk about the big ideas and theories Wolff likes to spin out. Sometimes he's right. (From the start, he saw the AOL–Time Warner merger for the synergistic stink bomb it was.) Sometimes he's not. (In 1998, he predicted Condé Nast would jettison the post–Tina Brown *New Yorker*.) And sometimes he sounds downright nutty. (He posits that the media backed the Iraq war because the moguls hoped to win a favorable ruling from the Federal Communications Commission on media-ownership limits.) But he has never been one to dull things up with cover-your-ass qualifiers or small-scale thinking. "He did get a lot of things majorly wrong, but he never was just pedestrian," says a former *New York* colleague. "You have to admire his balls."

In presenting his theories, Wolff takes readers inside the

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psyches of the media bigwigs involved, understanding that even arcane theories can be entertaining when explained in terms of the personal quirks of the rich and famous. This allows Wolff to deploy his sharp (and scathing) eye for detail. Of Steve Rattner's wife, Maureen White, he observes: "She had something more like a Beverly Hills than Manhattan coif and whitish makeup (her lips were exceptionally shiny and pale). There was no expense spared here, no detail untended, no consideration unthought of—but nevertheless (and unlike Beverly Hills) she presented herself with a certain austerity and sexlessness." Give Wolff five minutes in a room with someone, and he can get to "the nut of something," says a friend and former colleague. "What Michael is really good at doing is reading people. He's a psychiatrist on paper." Think of him as a Gail Sheehy for the mogul class—but dispensing scorching derision instead of faux empathy. As Wolff explains it, disgraced Hollinger CEO Conrad Black has done what he's done because of his need to be seen as a Great Man ("Stature is what he's sought: standing, significance, importance"). Maureen Dowd writes the way she does because she can't get a man. ("That would certainly explain her anger—it's at her own women-who-love-too-much weakness.") And "control freak" Rupert Murdoch's 1998 marital troubles signaled that "the most elemental part not only of Murdoch's personal life but of his business empire may have spun out of control." Part gossip columnist, part psychotherapist, part social anthropologist, Wolff invites readers to be a fly on the wall of the moguls' inner sanctum. Chronicling Steve Rattner's rise from ink-stained wretch to investment fund manager, Wolff writes: "How to be a dealmaker—a deal *macher*—without doing any deals? That was the question. How to be *out there* is the way it would have been put. We have to be out there, Steve, someone would have said."

Much to the annoyance of Wolff's critics, the scenes in his columns aren't recreated so much as created—springing from Wolff's imagination rather than from actual knowledge of events. Even Wolff acknowledges that conventional reporting isn't his bag. Rather, he absorbs the atmosphere and gossip swirling around him at cocktail parties, on the street, and especially during those long lunches at Michael's. "He's around town enough to have those insights, to spot people, to come across [pieces of information]," says a friend. He also has a talent for making the most of even the briefest encounters. "His great gift is the appearance of intimate access," says an editor who has worked with Wolff. "He is adroit at making the reader think that he has spent hours and days with his subject, when in fact he may have spent no time at all." More than one chapter of Wolff's 2003 book, *Autumn of the Moguls*, spotlights anecdotes about random mogul sightings in his neighborhood. In contrast to *The New Yorker*'s Ken Auletta, whose sympathetic portrayals of media moguls have allowed him to enter their inner sanctums, Wolff does not confer with the titans he covers. He channels them.

Grand "ideas and concepts" notwithstanding, Wolff is a successful columnist because he is an entertaining columnist. "He's a superb writer," raves Mort Zuckerman, overlord of the New York *Daily News* and *U.S. News & World Report*. "One of the things you look for in the publishing world is the whole notion of voice. It's a very difficult thing to come by." Without question, Wolff's writing is distinctive—glorious or ghastly, depending on whom you ask. His prose is a whirlwind of flourishes and tangents and asides that often stray so far from the central point that you begin to wonder whether there is a central point. ("I find it nearly impossible to read his columns," says a columnist at one of the dailies. "They're flabby. I don't know what the fuck he's trying to say.") Wolff's language and references are both erudite and lowbrow, cultured and crude. (In analyzing Martha Stewart's trial, Wolff dubs Doug Faneuil, ex-assistant of stockbroker Peter Bacanovic, "the Whitaker Chambers [sic] of Martha's circle," then shifts gears to describe "this sense of a lackey culture—the dominants and the submissives. Bacanovic as Martha's bitch. Faneuil as Bacanovic's bitch.") The tone is chatty and gossipy and catty-shading-into-bitchy. Opining about Arnold Schwarzenegger's sex life, Wolff pauses to marvel at wife Maria Shriver's freakishness—"The jaw planes, the cheekbone ridges. The porno-star hairdo"—and sum up a 1980 interview with her that he did for *Life* magazine: "She was over-vivid. On. Crystal-clear. Fabulous. Carpe diem-ish. She frightened me." If Wolff's psychoanalytic schtick evokes Sheehy, his voice smacks of the cheeky, exuberantly gay Brit talk show host Graham Norton.

But, above all, Wolff has excelled by saying the unsayable, taking shots both serious and petty at the media gods. And, truth be told, it's the petty shots that thrill the masses. It's one thing to trash Harvey Weinstein's business acumen; it's quite another to call him fat. "Michael will say anything about anybody," says *New York Times* media reporter David Carr (one of the few journalists who asked to be wholly on the record). "He's fearless in a way that people attribute to sociopathology but that I always thought was a business strategy." "Michael Wolff grabs people's attention because he can be brutal—and I mean that as a compliment," says Howard Kurtz, Carr's counterpart at *The Washington Post*. "He delights in ripping to shreds the various media hotshots and potentates who most journalists might trash in a bar but never in print." But, even as he's gigging the moguls, Wolff is openly in awe of them, frequently bemoaning (with a knowing wink) his helpless adoration. ("It is hard to escape the thrall.") Shrewder than a mere hatchet man, Wolff is perhaps best captured by the headline of Eric Alterman's *Atlantic Monthly* review of *Autumn of the Moguls*: "a portraitist who has mastered the art of the suck-up putdown."

It's unsurprising that, as a former colleague delicately puts it, "people really can't stand Michael." What is surprising is how much of the animus seems unrelated to the content of his commentary. On a meta level, Wolff is resented for not playing by the rules of his chosen profession. He has a reputation for busting embargoes and burning sources by putting off-the-record comments on the record. (A reputation cemented by his using an off-the-record conference as the basis for *Autumn*.) Half the New York-area media is

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still aghast at Wolff boasting in print about enlisting his son to serve as a spy while on a play date at Steve Rattner's home. ("What kind of person uses his child like that?" asked one outraged editor.) "Everything's a transaction with him," says Carr (who, after writing a positive piece about Wolff, found himself the subject of a self-congratulatory Wolff column about how he had spun Carr). "There's no unalloyed moment with Michael. You're always on the record and performing. I think people don't like him because they have to be careful around him." Says an editor close to Wolff, "There's a certain amount of fear, because people have been burnt so many times."

Much of the hostility, however, seems purely personal. While perfectly pleasant, Wolff's demeanor is reserved and a little cool (maybe it's the ice-blue eyes and the close-cropped white hair). "'Graciousness' isn't a word you would attach to him," says an ex-colleague. A few people chalk it up to social awkwardness, the insecurity of a Jersey kid made good; most write it off as arrogance. At *New York*, Wolff earned a reputation as a prima donna, where he was known for, as one ex-staffer put it, "strutting around like a little peacock" and requiring much hand-holding. The increasingly self-referential nature of his columns fueled the perception that he is overly impressed with himself. A friend of Wolff's recalls hearing a "very senior official at *The New York Times*" snipe that "if Wolff were any further up his own ass, he'd be a colonoscopy." And his weird love-hate relationship with the moguls gives some people the creeps. (One media wag jokes that a fawning column Wolff wrote about Walter Isaacson was a ploy to help him "get his hands on Walter's underwear for his collection.")

Poetically, the things about Wolff that his colleagues seem to hate the most—his ambition, his social climbing, his worship of status and buzz and money, his self-referentiality and solipsism—are seen by some as the perfect reflection of the world he covers (and thus the key to his success). New York is utterly obsessed "with success, competition, schadenfreude, and public failure," says one Wolff friend. "And I think most people felt Michael chronicled all that with absolute precision." "I find the Michael Wolff phenomenon so New York," says a veteran New York–area journalist who knows Wolff casually. "If he lived anywhere but in the middle of the New York media world, they would say the emperor has no clothes. He can't write. He doesn't report. But Graydon Carter doesn't give a shit. He only cares that he has buzz. ... This could only happen among the delusional New York chattering classes."

If so, Wolff may have a tough time maintaining his buzz at *Vanity Fair*—where he landed after a failed attempt to buy *New York* along with a coterie of mogul moneymen (including Zuckerman, Harvey Weinstein, and Donny Deutsch) that he had assembled. (Financier Bruce Wasserstein placed the winning bid, and, when the new management came in, Wolff was stunned to realize that "I was supposed to fall on my sword." Although, he muses, "If you pay fifty-five million dollars for a magazine, you don't want a competing power center, I suppose.") Though catering to an upscale, cosmopolitan sensibility, *Vanity Fair* isn't the Manhattan-centered vehicle that *New York* is. And, as a monthly, the magazine doesn't allow Wolff to play off the topic du jour. The pieces he's done so far are quite good, says Caroline Miller, who was editor of *New York* during Wolff's tenure (and to whom people think he showed disgraceful disloyalty by maneuvering to buy the magazine and, presumably, establish himself as editor). "They're just not ... they're going to be bigger and not so much intimately part of the conversation." What do the extra time and space provided by *Vanity Fair* give Wolff? asks Carr. "The luxury of many phone calls and doing a lot of reporting. But that isn't really in Michael's wheelhouse, is it?"

But, more than the format, Wolff's growing political focus may prove a poor fit. At *New York*, in between jabs at the likes of Steve Case and Sumner Redstone, Wolff made the occasional foray into politics. The results were typically unremarkable. The pieces were stylish and fast-paced but, on the whole, showcased the sort of conventional thinking and predictable observations that Wolff avoids in his mogul pocket-portraits. The topics were old standards: The pro-business, yuppie-ish, Clintonian Dems and the more economically lefty, antiwar types are in a fight for the party's soul; the Bush White House is manipulating the media; the "pageant-size fantasy" of certain starry-eyed Dems is of a last-minute Hillary run. His *pensées* tended toward the obvious: "My hunch is that the lower regard we have for you, the easier it is to pick yourself up from the trough. For George Bush, people's expectations have always been naturally low." None of his stuff was terrible. (He even had some nice takes on the Dean Internet phenomenon.) But it was decidedly unfresh. Even the pieces for which he won his 2004 National Magazine Award were based more on a p.r. stunt than on any sharp insights: At a press briefing in Doha, Qatar, Wolff stood up and asked General Vincent Brooks why it was worth the media's time to show up for such highly orchestrated, unnewsworthy events. Overnight, Wolff became a darling of the press and the left. "But what was that about really?" asks Carr (among others). "Was there some huge intellectual scoop driving that? No. He just had the stones to say what was on everybody's mind." (Wolff, meanwhile, took a different lesson from his "Doha moment." He's currently shopping around the idea for a TV series that would turn the cameras on the media, exposing the odd, occasionally absurd standards and practices of the business.)

Moreover, as a denizen of one of the bluest areas of blue-state America, Wolff's political perspective is not exactly nuanced. He is liberal (in a striving, aspirational, Clintonian new-Dem way); the Manhattan media universe in which he operates is overwhelmingly liberal; and, since he eschews traditional reporting, his opportunities for exposure to the non-liberal mindset may well be limited to his chat-show encounters on Fox News. It's hardly surprising, then, that Wolff's columns tended to line up along the basic

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Republicans-bad-but-effective/Dems-well-intentioned-if-often-bumbling axis. (Not to mention that only a hardcore Upper East Sider would see Wesley Clark's lack of warmth—his "austerity" and "precision"—as political advantages.) Bush (like so many conservatives) is portrayed as dumb but crafty, especially when it comes to Iraq. A virulent opponent of the war, Wolff cannot imagine any legitimate reason to have backed it. In one pre-invasion column, he suggested Bush was trying to relive Poppy's glory days. In another, he suggested the war was a product of Bush's quest to drag U.S. foreign policy down to his unthinking, unreflective level—and that the folks who supported it must have been in on the joke: "I think many people, perhaps most, if pressed, might suspect that the president has a screw loose about Iraq (which actually gives him an odd kind of idiot-savant nobility). That it's all too obsessional. That his view is too simple. (Not, however, that this in any way compromises the virtues of keeping it simple.) It's foot-stamping. *He tried to kill my daddy.*" This may have been the calculation of Wolff's cocktail party pals, but it almost certainly was not the case for the bulk of the 70 percent of Americans who supported the war at its outset. Then there's Wolff's bizarre, totally unsubstantiated conspiracy theory that the media hawked the war because its executives hoped that, if they didn't antagonize the administration, the FCC would loosen the limits on media ownership: "But *conspiracy* wouldn't quite be the right word. *Negotiation*, however, would be the right one. An appreciation of the whole environment, the careful balancing of interests, the subtleties of the trade (at this point, the ritual denial: 'There was no quid pro quo.')" It seems that even Wolff's mogul savvy abandons him when politics are involved.

Thus far, Wolff's political columns at *Vanity Fair* have been equally disappointing. When the Abu Ghraib story broke, he wrote a piece (which, to be fair, he banged out in something like 48 hours) about the reaction to the scandal at a swank book party Diller threw for Senator John McCain. The piece begins as a strange, vapid, inappropriate exercise in navel-gazing and name-dropping before morphing into an uncomfortably (if self-consciously) classist antiwar screed ("So, once again we've exported the troubled American underbelly, our scary, marginal, unsocialized, backwoods economic refugees, to another country") with weird asides about the "complexly layered eroticism" of battle and the "aesthetic" offensiveness of the photos. ("[T]he reaction, I'll bet, is not just revulsion at the pictures, but an even more devastating sense of a thing on your shoe.") Maybe this creepy indulgence could have worked as a shortish *New York* column with a shelf life of one week, but it may also be that war doesn't lend itself to Wolff's brand of frothy, isn't-it-all-so-amusing commentary.

Wolff's August profile of Democratic eminence Shrum also missed the mark, though for different reasons. If his Abu Ghraib musing is a technicolor vulgarity, his Shrum portrait is a gray, pedestrian primer. In a straightforward look at Shrummy's position as the dean of Democratic advisers, Wolff rehashes all the basics: his paleoliberal populism, his tendency to "captur[e] the candidate" and "shrumify" him, his formidable infighting skills, his abysmal track record in presidential races. But, with virtually no reporting, without access to his profile subject, and without the fundamental instinct for the world he's writing about, the piece feels flat. (Sadder still for Wolff fans, it's largely toothless, perhaps because he's writing about a fellow liberal in the pages of a sympathetic magazine.) There are a few nice observations about the political world (Republicans do tend to have more efficient press ops than Dems), and Wolff even takes a stab at analyzing the essence of a consultant "as exemplified by Shrum." ("His is a career not just of endless travel, terrible accommodations, incredible sleep deprivation, and ghastly food, but also of submission to the vastly inferior, albeit more socially presentable, front man.") But Wolff's Shrum riff (like many of his political riffs) lacks the insiderishness and juicy details to give it the authoritative feel of his mogul writing. And, in the end, you get the sense that his heart isn't really in it—that, all things considered, he'd rather be kicking it at Michael's, giggling with Harvey Weinstein about the heartburn Eisner's suffering over *Fahrenheit 9/11*. ("If only Michael Moore weren't such a sartorial *nightmare*," you can almost hear him sigh.)

Of the new job, Wolff admits, "I'm not sure I exactly know how to do this yet." But, as he adjusts to the longer lead times and the higher word counts, New York's mogul-slayer may want to consider whether—with only twelve columns a year—he wants to waste his time on political commentary that is unlikely ever to be buzzworthy. From the tall, lovely windows of his dining room/home office, Wolff has an enviable view of the daily hustle and bustle of Lexington Avenue. The action way down on Pennsylvania Avenue, however, is much tougher to see. ■

Tommy Franks's big mistakes.

Vision Impaired

BY SPENCER ACKERMAN

MEETING RETIRED GENERAL Tommy Franks can be an emotional experience. His craggy, battle-hardened face has an irrepressible habit of breaking into a warm, disarming smile. (An enraptured David Letterman was moved to compliment Franks on his "beautiful eyes.") As he traveled the country earlier this month promoting his new memoir, *American Soldier*, the commanding general of the two post–September 11 wars mixed a deeply felt patriotism with humanizing self-effacement. At the National

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Press Club last week, he effortlessly threaded a discursion about how he would have liked to subtitle his book "Ain't This A Great Country?" into an endearing admission that he once gave a speech on an aircraft carrier so long-winded that the ship's captain confessed he felt his hair growing. It's a winning combination. At a North Carolina book signing, one of the thousands of attendees waiting in line to shake Franks's hand compared seeing him to "meeting General Eisenhower."

That's certainly a comparison the Republican National Committee wants to encourage. While Franks has yet to formally endorse his commander-in-chief, he is scheduled to address the GOP convention in New York in primetime on September 2, just hours before George W. Bush accepts his party's renomination. The general will be a potent weapon in Bush's campaign to restore his tarnished image as a successful war president. After all, most Americans were introduced to Franks when the press-reticent general commented on the swift battlefield victories he reaped in Afghanistan and Iraq. As a result, Franks conjures up images of celebrations of Afghan children in the streets of Kabul and the fall of the statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad's Firdos Square.

Since Franks's July 2003 retirement from the Army, however, Americans have been treated to a disturbing new set of images from Iraq: the charred bodies of contractors lynched in Falluja, the black-masked militiamen of the Mahdi Army in Najaf, the unmuzzled dogs terrifying Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib. Whatever initial goodwill the Iraqis harbored for American forces is gone. In May, the final poll conducted for the now-defunct Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) found that over 80 percent of Iraqis distrust the continued U.S. presence in the country. And, in the last year, nearly 800 American troops have died and nearly 5,700 have been wounded there.

The situation in Afghanistan is little better. Even if the country is able to hold its twice-postponed national elections this year, it will still be in the hands of its various corrupt warlords. The Taliban, driven from Kabul and Kandahar but never destroyed, is steadily growing in strength. Its successful attacks on foreign aid workers have slowed reconstruction to a snail's pace. Al Qaeda's leaders—also driven from the country but never destroyed—are believed to be in the lawless tribal areas on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, carrying out or inspiring attacks around the world that have left hundreds murdered.

Franks is a symbol of these failures as much as he is a symbol of the initial military successes that preceded them. Although responsibility for the chaos in Iraq and Afghanistan surely flows more from Franks's superiors than from Franks himself, the general's decisions at the helm of Central Command (CENTCOM) abetted and exacerbated many of their errors. In planning for both Afghanistan and Iraq, Franks focused on the major combat that began each conflict to the detriment of the counterinsurgency and stability operations that would prove crucial to prevailing. As a self-styled maverick, he disdained fellow generals who questioned his strategy and glommed onto administration officials whose ideas about warfare were seriously flawed, creating a feedback loop that reinforced their mistakes. America will be living with the consequences for years to come.

WHEN FRANKS SAT down after September 11 to devise a plan for invading Afghanistan, he understood, according to *American Soldier*, that "America was through with half measures and pinpricks," like firing "million-dollar [Tomahawk missiles] into empty tents." Instead, he writes, "we were going to war—boots-on-the-ground war." But, mindful of the quagmire endured by a 620,000-strong Soviet army in the 1980s, Franks told his planning staff, "The question is *whose* boots, and how many pairs." Like Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Franks believed the Taliban could be routed and Al Qaeda destroyed with a minimal number of American troops. So he and his staff drew up a plan—a "unique page in military history"—to combine air power and a handful of unconventional forces (both Special Forces and CIA paramilitary teams) with the roughly 20,000 anti-Taliban

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PHILIP BURKE

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UNDERSTANDING THE EVOLUTION OF HOMELAND SECURITY

The Department of Homeland Security was formed in a time of crisis, and its mission is critical, with no room for failure. Yet the department, like any major new organization, evolves over time. Understanding the "Four Phases" of paradigm evolution — Initialization, Stabilization, Institutionalization and Optimization — is vital to understanding the challenges that face the department. Understanding the Four Phases helps temper the expectations of immediate performance with the reality of complex organizational change.

THE AUTHOR

DARRYL MOODY
Senior Vice President,
Homeland Security and Intelligence
BearingPoint Inc.

The events of September 11, 2001, caused an astonishing change in our national disposition. After the shock wore off, a remarkable surge in patriotic resolve grew to replace the grief of losing so many lives. Nowhere was this more evident than among the many public safety, first response and law enforcement professionals who effectively became front-line fighters against the war on terror here at home.

From small-town volunteer fire fighters to the leaders of the military and intelligence communities, Americans were ready to do what was necessary to prevent another terrorist attack on U.S. soil. It was this sense of duty and determination that brought the protection of American interests and infrastructure to the forefront of a national discourse. The era of homeland security had begun.

Today, as we Americans assess the progress of our preparation and prevention, we take a measure of comfort in our well-trained security and law enforcement professionals, advanced security and first response technology, and overall progress in securing our homeland. Many Americans, however, believe that so much more needs to be done. Getting the job done — increasing our homeland security — will require an unprecedented combination of cooperation, diligence and, most importantly, patience.

One of the most significant challenges that emerged after 9-11 was the realization that our many security and safety agencies needed to raise their levels of cooperation and integration. Many organizations now united in the homeland security mission had previously focused on more narrow mandates and responsibilities. This narrow focus, in part, contributed to the chain of events leading to the attacks of 9-11. Where before, the intelligence, emergency response and law enforcement communities were focused on their own systems and processes, the post 9-11 world demands integration and interaction.

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Now, a few years into the Homeland Security Department era, evidence of that integration is everywhere — from the increasingly thorough air-passenger screenings we've come to accept as routine to the establishment of an Office of Interoperability and Compatibility.

But even considering these and other measures, more certainly needs to be done. Homeland security professionals and citizens alike are asking: At what level of readiness should we be operating? How well conceived and executed are our homeland security strategies? What are the next steps?

These are important questions not only because they demonstrate the continued need to evaluate our Homeland Security efforts, but also because they represent the natural evolution of how a new paradigm — in this case the very notion of homeland security itself — is integrated into the fabric of our national protection. The development, integration and refinement of U.S. homeland security is not an overnight process.

The evolution of a major paradigm like homeland security is best viewed in four phases: Initialization, Stabilization, Institutionalization and Optimization.

INITIALIZATION PHASE

The Initialization Phase is the reaction to an event or crisis. People work to control damage while coming to terms with their environment. "Stop-gap" measures are put in place to quickly deal with the situation.

During the Initialization Phase, results are prioritized over efficiency. Non-optimized solutions are acceptable temporarily, as the demand for performance outweighs the concerns of affordability. Leaders are concerned with successful and immediate change; there is little room for failure and little budgetary concern during the Initialization Phase.

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STABILIZATION PHASE

As leaders and responders start to fully appreciate the scale and scope of the challenge, they also begin to establish roles and assign responsibilities. The "stop-gap" measures implemented during the Initialization Phase are adjusted and refined as lessons are learned. During the Stabilization Phase, homeland security leaders should modify programs, strengthen agencies and revise methodologies.

INSTITUTIONALIZATION PHASE

Accepting the realities of the new paradigm, people work to build lasting solutions — and the infrastructures that will support them — during the Institutionalization Phase. Those organizations, programs and processes that were established during the Initialization Phase — and refined during the Stabilization Phase — are now maturing. Organizations begin to behave like established programs, with all of the budgetary matters, accountability and bureaucracy that accompany them.

During the Institutionalization Phase, leaders apply the disciplines and structures that allow the organizations to drive toward predictability.

OPTIMIZATION PHASE

As efforts are institutionalized, the process of optimization then begins. With systems established and formalized, the goal becomes improving — rather than merely launching and maintaining — the new institutions. Refining processes, focusing resources and adjusting mission goals and objectives are all part of the process of optimization.

This final step in the evolution of homeland security will not have an "end date." Optimization is the eternal vigilance. It is the adjustment of homeland security policies and processes to new threats; adapting as our adversaries adapt.

Initially, homeland security efforts were understandably directed at those areas that were revealed as most vulnerable on 9-11. Bolstering airport security, training air marshals and guarding key government and military targets were national priorities. The Transportation Security Administration, perhaps the most prominent example, was developed rapidly, eventually focusing its attention on aviation security.

Now, with the protection of our air and border infrastructure improved, attention has turned toward railroads, power plants, water facilities, chemical production facilities, schools and similar potential targets. The further development of the nation's homeland security strategy was only possible because certain critical areas were addressed first.

"THE HOMELAND SECURITY ERA IS HERE, BUT IS NOT YET MATURE. ACCOMPLISHING EACH OF THE HOMELAND SECURITY OBJECTIVES WON'T HAPPEN OVERNIGHT."

While it may be somewhat frustrating to watch a national security framework develop linearly and methodically, it is the most effective approach. This sequence of evolution is, in fact, recognizable from many facets of life.

It is because homeland security is such a high-stakes undertaking that people are so incredibly aware of its progress and sensitive to delays.

"OPTIMIZATION IS THE ETERNAL VIGILANCE. IT IS THE ADJUSTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY POLICIES AND PROCESSES TO NEW THREATS; ADAPTING AS OUR ADVERSARIES ADAPT."

In the development of homeland security — as with many major initiatives — there are numerous concurrent efforts, each at a different stage of the four-phased process detailed above. This is the reality Americans now face, seeing various facets of our homeland security at various stages of development.

In many ways, the homeland security effort parallels the acceptance of any innovation that goes from its first breakthrough, to an emerging trend, and finally to popular acceptance.

Recognizing this four-phase process provides a means of seeing how new ways of thinking evolve, but it also reinforces the fact that it is not possible to have 100 percent success from Day One.

That's why it has been so important to identify this four-phase concept and manage public perception while identifying homeland security priorities. Airport security was an early priority, and now there's a focus on port security. From there, other critical infrastructure will be strengthened and homeland security will continue to evolve.

The homeland security era is here, but it is not yet mature. Accomplishing each of the homeland security objectives won't happen overnight. By understanding that this evolution will happen in distinct phases — and managing those phases — those accomplishments can come rapidly, effectively, and successfully.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

***Darryl Moody** is Senior Vice President for Homeland Security and Intelligence at BearingPoint. He is responsible for coordinating BearingPoint's support to homeland security initiatives across all government levels, commercial entities and international clients. Mr. Moody has more than 22 years experience in performing planning, management, reviews and analyses of business policies, practices, systems and programs for a variety of government and non-government organizations. He was one of the first 20 individuals assigned to the Transportation Security Administration task force in December 2001.*

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warriors of the Afghan Northern Alliance. He divided his plan into four phases. The first three were preparation, initial combat operations, and finally "decisive" combat operations. Phase IV would stabilize the country, requiring "counter-insurgency and civil affairs military forces" deployed over "a three-to-five-year period."

The plan, launched on October 7, 2001, initially seemed to vindicate Franks's strategy. The Northern Alliance captured Mazar-e-Sharif from the Taliban on November 9 and pushed south, seizing the capital, Kabul, a week later, and the Taliban stronghold of Kandahar on December 6. Barely 300 Special Operations Forces and 100 CIA operatives comprised the U.S. ground component.

But, by early December, hundreds of jihadists, including Osama bin Laden, were girding for a final battle at a one-square-mile redoubt near the Pakistan border known as Tora Bora—providing perhaps the best, and last, opportunity to destroy Al Qaeda. It never happened. Franks relied on Afghan militiamen, not Americans, for the assault. While they promised to seal off Al Qaeda's retreat, the corruption and relative lack of skill among the Afghans allowed bin Laden and his men to flee across the Pakistan border, and U.S. bombing was unable to stop them. Bin Laden (who had used the U.S. retreat from Somalia in 1993 and years of insufficient U.S. retaliation to his '90s attacks as the basis for his critique of America as a paper tiger) claimed victory: "The U.S. forces dared not break into our positions, despite the unprecedented massive bombing. ... Is there any clearer evidence of their cowardice, fear, and lies regarding their legends about their alleged power?"

Hamid Karzai's new government saw the U.S. passivity in Tora Bora as a disaster. By the next month, Afghan officials were openly imploring Washington to use the Army directly against the Taliban and Al Qaeda. "If the Americans don't want to repeat the mistakes made at Tora Bora, they will have to send in more ground troops to complement their aerial strategy," Karzai's national security chief told *The Telegraph*. Engineer Ali, a top Afghan intelligence official, was no more sanguine: "With the current strategy of bombing from the air, the Al Qaeda fighters merely disperse in any direction they choose—often with the cooperation of locals." By mid-2002, numerous military and intelligence after-action reports concurred. "We fucked up by not getting into Tora Bora sooner and letting the Afghans do all the work," a senior U.S. counterterrorism official told *The Washington Post*. "We didn't put U.S. forces on the ground, despite all the brave talk."

Franks, however, was unfazed. As he flew to a Northern Alliance meeting on December 22, he reflected, "I knew that there was still hard fighting ahead in Afghanistan. But the main resistance had been shattered. The remnants of the Taliban and Al Qaeda were hiding in the snowy mountains of the southeast, subjected to relentless bombing." And, because of his optimism, Franks saw no need for the robust counterinsurgency envisioned in Phase IV. Only 8,500 American troops were deployed to Afghanistan in 2002, and Franks limited their activity to hunting Al Qaeda on the country's southeastern border rather than establishing security and fighting militants around the country. The Pentagon, evidently with Franks's consent, blocked the expansion of international peacekeeping forces from their Kabul base of operations. And no American forces were used for stability operations.

As a result, over the last two and a half years, the fundamentalists have grown in strength, mounting increasing attacks on American forces, assassinating foreign aid workers, and terrorizing the Afghan population. Last September, a Taliban spokesman explained their strategy to David Rohde of *The New York Times*: Bog the United States down in a guerrilla campaign for "ten or twenty years" that it showed no ability to adapt to. Warlords now control the country, not Karzai. Yet, to Franks, reviewing the Afghan campaign in 2002, "We had accomplished our mission."

FRANKS HAD SO much faith in his Afghanistan strategy that he repeated it in Iraq. Again, the campaign was divided into four phases, with "stability operations" serving as Phase IV. And, once again, Franks showed comparatively little concern for the final phase. When he initially told Rumsfeld in February 2002 that Phase IV might require "as many as two hundred fifty thousand" troops, the defense secretary barely acknowledged the estimate. Franks got the message. So, when he briefed the National Security Council (NSC) on the invasion plan that August, and Rumsfeld said, "We will want to get Iraqis in charge of Iraq as soon as possible," Franks concurred: "At some point, we can begin drawing down our force. We'll want to retain a core strength of at least fifty thousand men"—as compared with the 150,000-man invasion force. While Franks pored over the minutiae of how to invade—positioning units, securing overflight agreements from neighboring countries, preparing "the whole alphabet soup of available Precision Guided Munitions"—he essentially shrugged his shoulders at what to do once Baghdad fell: "On one hand, larger Coalition military forces and martial law might be required to stay in country for years, in order to preserve security," he writes of his Phase IV deliberations. "On the other, the Iraqis might ... welcome the liberation and organize themselves swiftly to control Iraq without Coalition help."

Franks's invasion planning paid off in a three-week capture of Baghdad. But just as swift was the breakdown in law and order. Franks was unperturbed. When a British general reported to Franks that looting in Basra "was really revenge"—i.e., an expression of political fury likely to escalate—Franks replied, "Looks like we're winning the war, but violence like that is going to keep us here awhile." Similarly, when then–Major General David Petraeus of the 101st Airborne reported that Iraq was crawling with hidden ammunition while the 400,000-man Iraqi army "just walked home," Franks thought to himself, "I knew that would be a problem for Jay Garner's Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance."

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But, despite his February 2002 troop estimate for Phase IV, he never asked for more boots on the ground to secure the country. Instead, he argued for more "*wingtips* on the ground"—"hundreds, perhaps thousands, of civilians from America and the international community"—and, to facilitate their arrival, Franks writes, he advised Bush to declare the end of "major combat operations," thereby drawing a bright line behind Phase III (and prompting the infamous MISSION ACCOMPLISHED banner flown during Bush's May 1, 2003, speech on the USS *Abraham Lincoln*). And, while Franks had expected an infusion of international troops for Phase IV that never materialized, neither their absence nor the continued deterioration of security led him to adapt his strategy. "There was a commonly held belief that civic action would not be possible in Iraq without security," Franks writes. "I would continue to argue that there could be no security without civic action."

As a result, there was neither. In the months before Franks left CENTCOM in July 2003, the Baghdad murder rate jumped 35 percent. In May, what remained of the Baghdad police department received 260 reports of major property crimes; in June, it received 410. Instability spread around the country, preventing the CPA from rebuilding Iraq. (By the time the CPA disbanded in June, most of the $18.6 billion Congress appropriated for reconstruction remained unspent.) The deterioration of security and the lack of reconstruction had a debilitating effect on Iraqi hearts and minds, bringing many into the ranks of the various insurgent groups. As a fighter in Basra told *The Scotsman* last week, "We gave them the opportunity to develop Iraq. But, in fact, nothing has changed. Now, there is no electricity, no water, and even fewer jobs than before. ... We are fed up with the occupation." Yet Franks, whose early inability to provide security for Iraqis started the vicious circle rolling, has evinced no regret. When Ted Koppel noted to him that Phase IV of the Iraq war hasn't gone well, Franks replied, "I guess it's eye of the beholder."

FRANKS WASN'T ALONE in his illusions about what constituted victory and what would be necessary to secure it. Writing about his insistence that Iraqi security would surely follow reconstruction—and that no change of strategy was necessary despite the growing discord in the spring of 2003—he notes, "I knew George W. Bush and Don Rumsfeld agreed with me." Indeed, at practically every crucial juncture in Iraq and Afghanistan, Franks ratified the assumptions of his civilian superiors. At a November 2001 NSC meeting, for example, Bush dismissed using American troops for peacekeeping in Afghanistan: "We don't do police work. We need a core coalition of the willing and then pass on these tasks to others."

Indeed, senior administration officials have taken to invoking Franks's name to defend their strategic mistakes. At an Aspen Institute forum last month, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz was asked to respond to criticism from many in the military—most famously from former Army Chief of Staff General Eric Shinseki—that the United States did not send enough troops to Iraq. "President Bush's senior military advisers for the war were not the chief of staff of the Army," Wolfowitz replied. "They were the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General [Richard] Myers, and General Franks, the combatant commander in Iraq. And General Franks's requirement was exactly what he got. And his estimate of what we needed postwar was about a quarter of what General Shinseki talked about in public."

In his book, Franks doesn't directly address Shinseki's February 2003 remark to Congress that "several hundred thousand soldiers" would be necessary to secure peace in Iraq. Indeed, he is utterly dismissive of the generals who head the services, calling them "Title X motherfuckers," in reference to the section of U.S. Code that governs their appointment. Nor does he answer any of the other military analyses that predicted much of the current Iraq morass, such as a widely read Army War College study ominously warning that "long-term gratitude is unlikely and suspicion of U.S. motives will increase as the occupation continues." (The study emphasized that Phase IV planning would be more important than Phase III preparations.) Franks, *American Soldier* makes clear, considers himself an iconoclast, and so ignoring the advice of his military colleagues was almost a point of pride. "I had been a maverick all my life. ... I was frequently on the outside of the Army's conservative mainstream," he writes.

In Rumsfeld, Franks found a kindred spirit, someone eager to frustrate the military consensus. Indeed, while Franks lauds Bush in *American Soldier*, he reserves his most effusive praise for the defense secretary. "Rumsfeld was no mere 'like-thinking affiliate,' as several service secretaries have been described," he writes, "but rather a leader who wanted to use his own ideas to bring about change." Franks emerged from his first meeting with Rumsfeld dazzled by the defense secretary's ideas about military modernization—"[H]e was in an orbit all his own"—making Franks perhaps the only general in the Army to gush over a secretary widely considered the service's visceral enemy. But Franks sees himself as much more like Rumsfeld than like his fellow Army generals. So, when it came to planning for the Iraq war, he was enthusiastic at the mandate he received: "This was a revolutionary concept way outside the box of conventional doctrine." And, when it became clear to Franks that Rumsfeld would disturb the military's "conservative mainstream" with his plans for restructuring Pentagon operations more generally, he said to himself, "Good for him."

But not good for the servicemen and women. In a recent interview with the military newspaper *Stars & Stripes*, a reporter mentioned just a few of their burdens: open-ended deployments, tour extensions, and the like. "That's a sad thing," Franks replied, "but wouldn't it be really sad if we were getting our people hurt and killed and not accomplishing something?" Thanks in part to the strategies he used in Afghanistan and Iraq, Franks's question grows less hypothetical by the day. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Plots, Thick and Thin

INTENTIONALLY OR NOT, THE NEW version of **THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE** dramatizes an immense historical shift. The original, made in 1962, was set against the background of the Korean War, in the atmosphere of the Cold War, and dealt with a communist scheme to influence American politics. Times, to put it gently, have changed. A view of communism as a world threat has become almost quaint. The new film, updated to the time of the Gulf war, had to find new villains. This time the ogres are not communists but huge global corporations of the Halliburton/Enron stripe, avid for power. Capitalism takes over the villainy from communism.

THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE
(Paramount)

SHE HATE ME
(Sony Pictures Classics)

Of course it is possible that the producers purposely chose the *Candidate* shape as a way to attack corporate globalism. But it seems more likely that they began with the remake plan and then inexorably came to the need for Halliburton, etc. By this change, the original meaning of the title was lost; and the authors of the new script had to find an excuse for it. So they invented a huge corporation called the Manchurian Group that is at the bottom of things.

The 1962 screenplay was derived by George Axelrod from a novel by Richard Condon. The present writers, Daniel Pyne and Dean Georgaris, proceeded from that source but altered as they went. Details of differences from the original are less important than the resemblance in outline. An American soldier, Raymond Shaw, is one of a group captured in Kuwait, brainwashed and programmed, then released to return home and do damage. Shaw is the (beloved) son of a prominent rightist American senator, Eleanor Shaw, who can use his rightist programming for her own ends. The new screenplay misses the irony in the original—the conservative senator benefiting by a communist scheme. Now Senator Shaw is conjoining with people whom she admires. Her son was awarded a Medal of Honor for his actions in the Middle East, and that medal has launched his political career. She is now maneuvering to get him the vice-presidential nomination in an approaching election, and she has plans to make him president exceptionally soon.

A special justification for this remake comes from the array of talents involved. The original film was cunningly directed by John Frankenheimer with a cast that was scintillating—except for Frank Sinatra, whose performance was shallow. Sinatra played Ben Marco, a fellow veteran who gets some hint of what has happened to himself and his friend and tries to right matters. Now—another marker of historical change—the role is played by Denzel Washington. Perhaps Marco would not have been black if Washington had not been available; but happily he was on hand and is at his expansive best. Washington has done some trumpery films in the last few years, but here he has a role that allows him to invest his whole self. He fills the screen with Marco's sober, deep, troubled presence.

Senator Shaw was first played by Angela Lansbury, as a Machiavellian creature of cold steel slicing her way ahead. It was one of Lansbury's best performances, and it seems unfair to compare her with Meryl Streep, who is the senator now. Lansbury is gifted: Streep transcends adjectives like that. Her role is written adequately, but Streep goes beyond it. With stature, fire, and enticing subtlety, Streep becomes a woman something like a monarch in Racine. She is said to have modeled her role on some prominent political women. Possibly. I'd prefer it if, in authenticity at least, they modeled themselves on her. Two vivid smaller portraits come from the ever-welcome Jon Voight as a liberal senator and Bruno Ganz (he of *The Marquise of O*) as a mysterious scientist.

The one disappointment in the cast is Liev Schreiber, who plays Raymond Shaw (Laurence Harvey's role the first time). I first noted Schreiber in a Broadway cast about a dozen years ago and have admired him on stage and in films ever since. But Shaw is not his role. He doesn't sound or look like Streep's son or like the ideal political torchbearer that she wants. More importantly, and unlike any previous time when I have seen him, he seems ill at ease, remote. His performance here made me suspect that Schreiber is, in a sense, another Kenneth Branagh—an extraordinary actor who is simply not a film star.

Tak Fujimoto, the cinematographer who has been invaluable ever since *Badlands* in 1973 (instances: *The Silence of the Lambs*, *Philadelphia*), gives the film a texture that lends physical verity to its somewhat gimmicky plot. The director was Jonathan Demme, who has reminded us all through his uneven career that he is intelligent and discerning. Here he works as any really good director does, as if he had waited all his life to make this picture. Frankenheimer's directing of the first *Candidate* certainly had that quality—perhaps a bit too much of it, a smidgen of self-display. Demme serves the picture completely. Among other assets, he is a wizard at congregation: with either a small group like the soldiers' poker game at the start or the Roman spectacle of a political convention, Demme choreographs to make things happen precisely without seeming arranged. And his work with Washington and Streep shines with his appreciation of them.

Spike Lee is becoming almost as much a case as a director. With his very first feature, *She's Gotta Have It* (1986), it was pleasurably clear that he is a born filmmaker. He showed much more than talent in *Do the Right Thing* (1989), which is the best film I know about African

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Americans, a work with the lift of an epic, vernacular though it is. *Malcolm X* (1992)—with Denzel Washington, by the way—resonated with the spirit of the man and Lee's understanding of him. But since then, watching Lee's career has been generally sad, a matter of seeing that, in everything he does, his talent is being spent on inadequate material.

As if to regain high ground, Lee, with Michael Genet, has concocted a screenplay called **She Hate Me** that is apparently meant to re-establish him as both serious and daring. His protagonist is a black Harvard MBA named Jack Armstrong (the name of a 1940s radio superhero) who is a high executive of a big pharmaceutical company engaged in a search for an AIDS cure. Armstrong discovers fakery, refuses to play along with his bosses, and is canned. He is broke and unemployable, a victim of principle. Though this whole segment is intended as ruthless satire, it is only a cartoon.

Now Lee means to show his and Jack's range, moving from satire to farce. Jack's former girlfriend, who is now a lesbian, wants to get pregnant, and so does her partner. They will pay Jack well for his services. Reluctantly but competently, he obliges. They then set up a stud service for lesbians with Jack as the provider. I lost count of how many women he is able to oblige in one night, but he gulps Viagra and carries on at thousands of dollars per paternity. Soon Lee's intended bawdy revelry becomes tedious and dumb.

He has somehow found endings for the two sections of the film, but it all turns out a bedraggled mess. Lee presumably had two ideas, one an exposé of pharmaceutical greed, the other a sex comedy: then he decided that neither one would make a film in itself and came up with the lame idea of combining them. What makes the resulting blunder even worse is that, intrinsically, almost every scene is directed well. ■

Robert Brustein on Theater

The Past Revisited

THE FROGS
(Vivian Beaumont Theater)

AFTER THE FALL
(American Airlines Theater)

Two recent productions were like trips into the past, one of them into my own past. The new version of Aristophanes's **The Frogs** at the Vivian Beaumont is a revision of a show that I originally commissioned from Burt Shevelove in 1974 as an after-season fund-raising lark, staged in the Yale swimming pool. As the press has noted somewhat obsessively, Meryl Streep, Sigourney Weaver, and the playwright Christopher Durang were in the original cast. But the show was a product of the Yale Repertory Theatre, not, as has been mistakenly alleged, the Yale Drama School, and these worthies were drama students at the time, doing very small choral roles. The central actors, actually, were Larry Blyden playing Dionysos, shortly before his premature death in a car accident; Michael ("Gotta get the doughnuts") Vale as his slave, Xanthias; Jeremy Geidt and Anthony Holland as Shakespeare and Shaw (substituted for Aeschylus and Euripides in the original); and a chorus of eighteen undergraduates from the Yale swimming team as the frogs.

The moment these aquatics dove into the Payne Whitney pool, accompanied by Stephen Sondheim's pulsing title tune, "Frogs! We're the frogs," was the highlight of the evening. It may have been the only highlight. I had originally hoped that *The Frogs* would be to Aristophanic comedy what *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* was to Plautine farce, this time without music. Shevelove insisted on working again with Sondheim, who had time to write and to rehearse only six songs. The addition of occasional music confused the identity of the piece, so that it emerged as neither a refreshed classical revival nor a Broadway musical, neither fish nor frog.

Still, Shevelove's Yale production of thirty years ago has achieved almost legendary status, while the present expanded version, "even more freely adapted by

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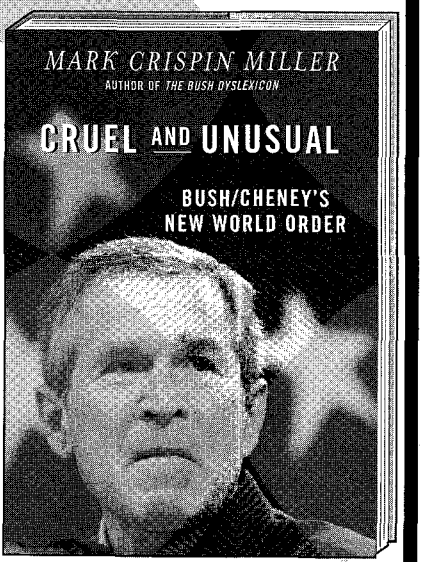

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Nathan Lane," has been almost universally condemned. The reaction baffles me. The present production, though far from perfect, is superior to ours in nearly every possible way. First of all, it knows what it is—a Broadway musical that departs even more radically from the original play than did Shevelove's adaptation. And while the tone wobbles rather unevenly between burlesque gags and political pieties, it is a professional piece of work with a first-rate cast, imaginative direction, an improved and expanded Sondheim score, and a book that provides some genuine belly laughs.

This is not something I would have expected from Nathan Lane. In the past, admittedly, he has played the kind of roles that used to belong to Zero Mostel, Phil Silvers, Bert Lahr, and Sam Levene. (Lane is the most Jewish of non-Jewish comedians.) But except for his Max Bialystock in *The Producers*, inferior to Zero's but not totally eclipsed by it, his performances have never impressed me as equal to theirs in largeness or madness. For one thing, his love affair with the folks out front (and theirs with him) has been a little too promiscuous to sustain that hard-boiled, brazen independence of style necessary for great clowning. There was always a hint of sentiment bubbling on the edges of his quavering tenor that threatened to weaken the tensile strength required for farce.

That soft quality is not entirely absent from Lane's acting or his writing in *The Frogs*. But, in collaboration with the director Susan Stroman, he has delivered at least one and a half acts of satisfying entertainment. Stroman demonstrates once again, as in her production of *The Producers*, that she is not only an accomplished choreographer but also a fine director of farce. She has a real affinity with the (politically incorrect) traditions associated with Minsky burlesque and Catskills vaudeville. She recognizes that this kind of comedy issues from the incompatibility between erotic desire and social mores; that you can't have pratfalls without showgirls, or showgirls without male lust. So did Aristophanes, and that is why his male actors always wore erect phalluses.

In the same tradition, Lane's dialogue is full of outrageous puns and top-banana gags. (Hercules: "I go to clean the Augean stables." Dionysos: "No shit!") I suspect that is why so many critics have panned the show—like that barroom character in Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, they "damn anything that's low." Many years ago, in a review of *One Touch of Venus*, Eric Bentley observed that whenever Broadway adapts Greek or Roman classics, it inevitably turns them into middlebrow commodities. Lane has opted for the lowbrow, looking for the modern equivalent of Aristophanic bawdry, and recognizing that the wise adapter will violate the letter of the original in order to better observe its spirit.

Unfortunately, there are times when he violates the spirit as well. Aristophanes displayed a powerful pacifist consciousness in plays such as *Peace* and *Lysistrata*—but not in *The Frogs*. Lane's attempt to insert antiwar asides into the play accounts for occasional shots at the Bush administration ("Have you listened to our leaders? Words seem to fail them—even the simplest words") at the cost of a consistent tone. In Aristophanes, Dionysos, the god of drama, goes down to Hades to find a genuine dramatic poet and bring him back to earth in order to end a theatrical drought. He chooses Aeschylus over Euripides (always a butt of Aristophanes) after the two men weigh their verses on a scale and Aeschylus's prove heavier. Although the theater is still in trouble in the Lane adaptation ("A little wine will get you through a lot of drama"), his Dionysos is now more driven by political considerations: he seeks a playwright who will write about "a war we shouldn't even be in." In Hades he finds Shakespeare and Shaw, and after a rather feeble debate based on dialogue from their plays, Dionysos chooses Shakespeare to return with him. Why the often jingoist Shakespeare would function as a fiercer critic of the Iraq war than the pacifist Shaw is not explained.

Another interpolation, in which Dionysos, mourning his dead wife Ariadne, finds her in Hades, encourages Lane's biggest weakness—his sentimentality. But the hell with it. He has worked up enough good comic scenes to compensate. One revolves around Dionysos, Xanthias, and a giant Herakles (Burke Moses) and involves a huge studded club and a lion skin with a will of its own. Another is the journey of Dionysos and Xanthias down the river Styx in company with Charon the ferryman (a delicious John Byner), full of vaudeville shtick and even a few comic thrills when Xanthias is attacked by a giant amphibian. And a third is the first entrance of the frogs, brek-kek-kek-kek-ing, leapfrogging, and bungee jumping—a genuine coup de théâtre, accompanied by Sondheim's stirring music reinforced by Jonathan Tunick's rousing orchestration.

What works best is the chemistry between Lane's Dionysos and the Xanthias of Roger Bart. Bart was a late replacement, but his vaguely bemused, slightly effeminate slave act is very winning. (He does his least convincing acting when the script requires him to make love to a buxom showgirl.) Bart played the flaming queen Carmen Ghia in *The Producers*, and, reunited here with Lane, the two display the ease of an old vaudeville team. Sondheim's score is still uneven (the dirge-like "It's Only a Play" belongs in a more melancholy production), but it has a lot of felicities. William Ivy Long's reptilian costumes are a blast of color, and Giles Cadle's set is always appropriately in motion, particularly in the debate scene, where all the auditors in Hades seem to be seated in the Beaumont (an unfortunate analogy for hell). *The Frogs*, for all its deficiencies, gives a lot of pleasure to its audiences. It deserves much kinder treatment than it is getting at the hands of my humor-impaired brethren.

Michael Mayer has set his Roundabout Theatre Company revival of Arthur Miller's **After the Fall** in the departure lounge of an airport terminal—perhaps out of deference to American Airlines, which has renamed the theater. Whatever the case, this plane never takes off. I once wanted to write a play about being in hell, where damnation consisted of being shunted from one airline counter to another as your flight was ticketed, delayed, canceled, reticketed, rescheduled, redelayed, and recanceled for all eternity. Here it is. Miller has cut about an hour out of the original version, which was performed at Lincoln Center in 1964 in a production directed by Elia Kazan. It still seems like an eternity, so full of hot air that it would be more appropriately staged in a wind tunnel.

What is fatally wrong with this work is that Miller never found the proper metaphor through which to purge his feelings regarding a series of traumatic personal experiences. He has continuously (and disingenuously) claimed that the play is not autobiographical. But when the hero has an older brother, a bankrupt father, and a hysterical mother, all of whom speak in cadences out of *Death of a Salesman* ("Kid, the woman

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was his right hand"); when he has written a "majestic brief" that brings him great fame; when his closest buddy and professional mentor names names to the committee, leading to the suicide of a mutual friend; when his three wives are a morose, guilt-producing neurotic, an uneducated, suicidal sex queen, and a gentle Viennese woman who guides him through German extermination camps—then you have exact and unequivocal analogies. Miller has not even made much effort to change the names of the wives (Marilyn is Maggie, Inge is Holga). It is as if, at the same time that he is denying parallels, he is feeding material to future biographers. Indeed, the play has no plot, only episodes from a life—the hero's childhood, his failed marriages, his encounters with true and false friends. Only the scenes with the feline Maggie possess any energy, as Quentin (as Miller calls himself in this play) evolves from her intellectual mentor into her chief scratching post.

I regret my initial review of this play, which was unnecessarily harsh. But seeing the work forty years later, I had the same feelings of entrapment that provoked my previous irritability. You sit there waiting for just one flash of spontaneity, just one glimmer of authenticity. Quentin doesn't really want to communicate with other dramatic characters. He may share a bench or a Saarinen lounge chair with them, but he is generally facing us. It is the audience he wants to talk to (or at); it is the audience he wants to persuade. Instead of telling a story, Miller prefers to pour out guilt and evacuate feelings, even though Quentin is always more sinned against than sinning. The result is a seemingly endless stream of self-justification.

As the title suggests, it was around the time of this play that the progressive Miller discovered original sin. (There is some suggestion that Auschwitz may have been a factor, too.) "Remember the time," he says, "when there were good people and bad people, and how easy it was to tell?" And again, "If all of us are innocent, where does all this evil come from?" And again, the final revelation that "we are very dangerous." But beware the man who discovers the moral satisfactions of personal guilt. He will never give you another quiet moment.

In the current production, the play no longer possesses the Pirandellian frisson of being directed by one of the characters whom it stigmatizes, namely Kazan (a.k.a. the name-naming Mickey). That may be why Mayer has persuaded his designer, Richard Hoover, to set a play abstractly located in "the mind, thought, and memory" of Quentin in an airport and pass it off as *The Terminal*. This device only reminds us how seriously the production needs Tom Hanks. As Quentin, the saturnine Peter Krause endlessly repeats the same emotional cycles. He cannot succeed where even the great Jason Robards failed—in bringing this prolix, grandiloquent, self-pitying bore to life. Carla Gugino is superior to Barbara Loden, the original Maggie, particularly in managing the abrupt transition between adoring kitten and roaring virago. But most of the cast has been pushed into hysterical climaxes, and it doesn't help that whenever someone starts to overact, Mayer has a jet plane take off. Come to think of it, if Miller has not found the objective correlative for this play, maybe Mayer has—it is the satisfaction of departure, which I shared with the rest of the audience at the end of the evening. ■

James Wolcott
Idiot Wind

DYLAN'S VISIONS OF SIN
By Christopher Ricks
(Ecco, 517 pp., $26.95)

WHAT DID BOB DYLAN ever do to deserve Christopher Ricks? No artist should be subjected to this much wanton affection: it's unseemly, like being hugged by a stranger who won't let go. In *Dylan's Visions of Sin*, Ricks gloms on to the guitar poet as if trying to dissolve the boundary where Dylan ends and he begins. It's a full-body mind-meld that results in a windy duet. The professor of poetry at Oxford University and the author of highly regarded studies of Milton, Keats, Tennyson, and Beckett, Ricks performs an Empsonian close reading of Dylan's song lyrics and gnomic utterances, mining deep correspondences and strange affinities between the bard of Hibbing, Minnesota and the heavy movers of English literature.

Ricks's purpose is to give Dylan his proper place in Parnassus. In one chapter alone, he refers to Philip Larkin (reprinting entire Larkin's "Love Songs in Age," a poem whose pertinence to Dylan seems rather frail), Wordsworth, Hardy, Milton, Donne, Henry James, Eliot, Lawrence, Jonson, Marvell, Browning, Christina Rossetti, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and "Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, the aphorist and sage" (oh, him). His elaborate floor show of erudition isn't meant to make unlettered rock fans feel shabby, untutored. It's Ricks's way of welcoming Dylan buffs into the literary canon, letting them know what riches await. He adopts an air of familiarity on the page that could not be more ingratiating. He wants to disarm Dylan's wary reservations ("Assuredly, I don't want to do you in, or select you or dissect you or inspect you or reject you") and the reader's, too, presenting himself as quite the avuncular chap.

Addressing a critic's comment that Ricks tends to fetishize Dylan's recordings at the expense of live performance, Ricks quips, "What, me? All the world knows that it is women's shoes that I'm into." When Dylan flicks off an E.E. Cummings–esque phrase in an early liner note about "the white house head" needing hair restorer, Ricks fusses, "But can it be that Dylan was guilty of baldism? A bad hair day. Time to soothe and smooth: *A Message from Bob Dylan to the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee* (13 December 1963) assured those of us who are bald oldsters or baldsters that 'when I speak of bald heads, I mean bald minds.'" Along with such coy preenings, there are the puns, the awful, twee puns: "crèche course," "retentive to the annals," "interluckitor," "The Grooves of Academe!" This baldster punster can't restrain himself. "You may be a Preacher, Mr. Dylan, and it may be necessary

James Wolcott is a columnist at VANITY FAIR. *He is the author, most recently, of* ATTACK POODLES AND OTHER MEDIA MUTANTS: THE LOOTING OF THE NEWS IN A TIME OF TERROR *(Miramax).*

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to take the bull, papal or not, by the horns." An analysis of "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" finds him sighing, "It's a hard song to befall the critic. (Tempted to take a hard rain check.)" And Herrick's famous line "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may" has him reminiscing, "Gather ye rose-buds.... But who could ever forget the great moment when Lou Costello suddenly says to Bud Abbott, 'Gather ye moss, Bud, while ye may'?" Abbott and Costello never were funny.

Bending himself silly to avoid coming across as a stuffy academic (he opens one chapter by airily dismissing Jean Cocteau as an "arty old fraud"), Ricks is so chatty that you may long for the admonitory severities of F. R. Leavis, or Edmund Wilson in sourpuss mode—a rumble of thunder to subdue this rattling of teacups. "Day of the Locusts," one of Dylan's lesser (that is, lousier) songs, recounts what happened when he received an honorary degree, a doctorate in music, from Princeton. "As I stepped to the stage to pick up my degree," Dylan sings, "The weather was hot, a-nearly 90 degrees." Which gets Ricks to a-thinking: "My degree, 90 degrees. Did you realize, sir, before making such a song and dance about your honorary degree, that there are people out there who have been awarded nearly ninety degrees? Take the sage George Steiner, for one.... I am aware (as people say when too aware of themselves) that 90 degrees is a tot not of academic garlands but of heat. (90 honorary degrees would mean that you were a very hot property indeed, possibly even hot shit.)"

Dylan's rhyming of "ouch" and "psychiatric couch" in the jokey "Talkin' World War III Blues" sets Ricks off on another riff.

> Ouch: no amount of plump cushioning can remove the pain that psychiatry exists to deal with—and that psychiatry in due course has its own inflictions of.... Dylan's word "pad" ["Nurse, get your pad, the boy's insane"] plays its small comic part; to *write* on, not like the padded couch (not padded enough: Ouch!) or the padded cell. *Ouch/couch* is a rhyme that is itself out to grab you, and that knows the difference between "Tell me about it" as a soothing professional solicitation and as a cynical boredom....
>
> Or there's the rhyme in [the song] *Mozambique* of "Mozambique" with "cheek to cheek" (along with "cheek" cheekily rhyming with "cheek" there, a perfect fit). There's always something strange about place names, or persons' names, rhyming, for they don't seem to be words exactly, or at any rate are very different kinds of word from your usual word.

Nearly five hundred pages of this dithery-do, and it never stops, Ricks mercilessly sharing everything he knows, suspects, remembers, heard, read, and finds ever so droll. It's like being stuck in a lecture hall with no clock and a lecturer who can't take a hint.

> If I am right in having come to believe that in due course *One Too Many Mornings* rescinds the state of mind that dominated the middle verse, then I need to rescind my adverse judgment on what I took to be a lack of judgment.

> When I paint my masterpiece, I had better acknowledge that one day it may need to be restored. According to *Visions of Johanna*, "Mona Lisa musta had the highway blues," but the greens that are now highly visible in the painting are viewed with suspicion inside the museums-world. But then every restoration, whether political or painterly (the pristine Sistine?), goes up on trial. For history is like infinity with its Louvre doors.

> When Robert Shelton reviewed *Saved*, he (even he who had, from the first, heard Dylan so well) announced that "three of the numbers ... frankly don't touch me at all." A blasphemous thought rises up, about Shelton and those three numbers: thou shalt deny me thrice. "You have given me eyes to see." Ears, too. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And having ears, hear ye not?

> I still remember the thrill that ran through me in the fifties (I was in my twenties) when I heard that an American poet at Oxford, Donald Hall, fully five years my senior, has said of poetry that "You gotta fake it but you gotta fake it good." True, the well-educated young Don was kinda faking it, but he knew who he was talking to (to whom he was talking?): even-younger Englishmen and Englishwomen who would all but swoon at the uncowed manliness that knew better than to say "fake it well" when it was so much more democratic, so much less truckling, to say "fake it good." Agreed, there is truckling and truckling.

What is he babbling about?

WHEN YOU CHANCE ACROSS the rare succinct and genuinely felt paragraph in this book, you are so grateful that you want to clip it out and frame it. In a long analysis of Dylan's early protest song "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll," an account of a young rich swell named William Zanzinger who murdered a fifty-one-year-old black kitchen maid with a blow from the cane "that he twirled around his diamond ring finger," Ricks shows how Dylan's omissions and reiterations construct an overpowering sense of injustice. "The song never says she's black, and it's his best civil rights song because it never says she's black.... But then you know that Zanzinger is white, though it never says this either. It's a terrible thing that you know this from the story, and from the perfunctory prison sentence [Zanzinger received a paltry six months], even while the song never says so. It's white upon black, it's man upon woman, it's rich upon poor, it's young upon old." Then the payoff:

> *Hattie Carroll* is a supreme understanding of the difference between writing a political song and writing a song politically. T. S. Eliot knew, and practiced, the difference between writing religious poems and writing poems religiously. It is good to be able to write religious poems, but the great thing is being able to write poems religiously, to have religion be not the subject of a poem but the element. *Hattie Carroll* is one of Dylan's greatest political songs, not so much because it has a political subject as because everything in it is seen under the aspect of politics. Truly seen so.

(In Mike Marqusee's excellent *Chimes of Freedom: The Politics of Bob Dylan's Art*, we learn the postscript to this travesty: "In 1991, Zanzinger was convicted by a Maryland court of collecting more than $60,000 rent on rural shanties that lacked indoor plumbing or sanitary outhouses,

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and which in many cases he no longer even owned. The victims were almost all poor black people.")

THERE IS A SEMBLANCE OF ORganization to Ricks's book, or at least separate buckets set to catch the various drips of rumination. Seven chapters are devoted to the seven deadlies, four to the cardinal virtues, three to the heavenly graces. Ricks concedes that his groupings are a tad arbitrary. "The claim in this book isn't that most of Dylan's songs, or even most of the best ones, are bent on sin. Simply that (for the present venture in criticism) handling sin may be the right way to take hold of the bundle." But is it? The chapter on sloth, for example, begins with Ricks acknowledging that sloth is a slug-like condition alien to Dylan, whose prolific career as singer/songwriter/performer/vagabond/poet testifies to his unflagging industriousness and jittery energy. "The opposite of slothful? 'Diligent' is the opposing term that is everywhere in the Book of Proverbs (which Dylan knows like the back of God's hand). O O O O that Dylanesque rag. It's so elegant. So intelligent. So Dyligent. Never negligent." But still Ricks keeps sleuthing, determined to pursue the faint trails of indolence in some of Dylan's lazybones album-fillers—"All the Tired Horses," "Time Passes Slowly," "Clothes Line Saga"—wherever they may lead, usually nowhere. Trying to decipher the relevance of the date January 30 in "Clothes Line Saga," Ricks muses, "January the thirtieth, eh. Why that day? (King Charles I's deathday? The birthday of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt...?) Who knows? Who cares?"

Who knows, who cares, indeed. And the chapter on greed delivers an even bigger shrug. "When it comes to greed and Dylan, there's only so much I can do," Ricks moans, after pursuing some false leads. "Are there not, for instance, several songs that flirt or cavort with greed as their need?" Alas, no. "They turn out to be about sensual exuberance rather than greed, and insofar as what feels like greed does course through their vinous veins, it is high-spirited appetite as corporeal capering, not any slumped lumpish piggishness in clover." A sentence like that belongs on a barge.

Shifting his gaze from the wicked parlors of sin to the wooden pews of virtues and heavenly graces, Ricks must overcome the resistance of those who find Dylan's born-again phase an episode best forgotten, like Ethel Merman's foray into disco. Dylan, who was visited by a vision of Jesus in a hotel room in Tucson in 1979, recorded three albums of Christian devotion and previews of Armageddon, *Slow Train Coming*, *Saved*, and *Shot of Love*. In concert, Dylan laced into nonbelievers who heckled his sermonettes between songs, telling them if all they wanted to do was rock and roll, "You can go and see KISS and you can rock and roll all the way down into the pit!"

Dylan eventually abandoned his hellfire preaching, but the acrid disdain for his electric psalms lingers among fans and critics, which Ricks laments. He believes that we should loosen our spiritual flaps. "Most Dylan-lovers are presumed to be liberals, and the big trap for liberals is always that our liberalism may make us very illiberal about other people's sometimes letting us down by declining to be liberals.... You can believe whatever you like so long as it's liberal: this isn't any less dogmatic than Christianity, and has its own way of being menacingly coercive." It's difficult to picture any outbreak of mad-dog liberalism being as "menacingly coercive" as the Spanish Inquisition or the Salem witch hunts, and the problem isn't simply that secular humanists "persist in treating the Christian songs as if they were a personal affront," and thus need to get past their petty feelings.

Where the Dylan of *Highway 61 Revisited* mixmastered biblical characters and imagery into hilarious, speed-freak jive in the spirit of the supreme comic hepcat Lord Buckley—"God said to Abraham, 'Kill me a son'/Abe says, 'Man, you must be puttin' me on' "—the born-again Bobster was a humorless servant of Scripture, a righteous nag. His religious vision went from psychedelic to parchment brown, spreading the Good Word with his own special twang. It's something of a drop-off in majesty hearing the King James Version of Paul's Letter to the Corinthians—"Charity beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things"—Dylanized into "Love that's pure hopes all things/Believes all things, won't pull no strings," in "Watered-Down Love."

But not to Ricks, who can turn every toothpick into a totem pole, and locate the dense sub-surface in any doggerel couplet: "Love that's pure 'won't pull no strings': this strings us along by means of the plain-spun double negative, the grammatical solecism ('Won't pull *any* strings, Master Dylan') that then strings together 'to pull strings' ('to exert influence privately') and 'no strings attached': *string*, 'a limitation, condition, or restriction attached to something. *Freq.* in phr. *no strings attached*.' " Head deep in his dictionary, Ricks fails to use his headphones and heed the musical objection to Dylan's born-again albums that refuses to go away after so many years—their schlocky arrangements. "Gotta Serve Somebody," with its black-chick backup chorus and brassy horns, recalls the ersatz gospel beltings of Elvis in Las Vegas. Jesus in a jumpsuit.

A CRITIC WHO DOES NOT MAKE critical distinctions is no longer a critic, he is an enthusiast—hardly the worst thing in the world, since many enthusiasts have their own tough grading systems and sore spots. As any reader of Nick Hornby's novel *High Fidelity* knows, rock-and-roll record collectors are among the pickiest pedants around. But Ricks is an easy grader, so avidly receptive it's as if he has Mouseketeer ears. This fan doesn't differentiate between minor Dylan and major Dylan, the lightning strokes and the lazy doodles; he flosses himself up to the same level of gleeful appreciation no matter which number he is disassembling.

Take "Lay, Lady, Lay," from *Nashville Skyline*. Recorded in 1969, the year of the Woodstock Festival and Led Zeppelin's first LP, *Nashville Skyline* flummoxed listeners with its valentine medley of Tin Pan Alley moon-June ditties sung with a cheerful lobotomized lilt. The rail-thin sarcastic ranter of "Like a Rolling Stone" had plumped up into a juicy Jimmy Dean sausage. "The classic nasal tone has cleared up like last winter's strep throat, and with it has gone the old anger, irony,

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and humor," wrote Albert Goldman in a review for *Life* magazine. "Instead of a Scotch-American Presbyterian Covenanter Hilly-Billy scraggle-neck chicken-skin mountain prophet man, the new rubicund Dylan is a relaxed country 'bo' whose 'Lay, lady, lay across my big brass bed' barrel-tone is enriched with faint echoes of Darktown sweet talk."

In a few pages, Goldman places "Lay, Lady, Lay" and *Nashville Skyline* in the biographical-musical context of Dylan's career at that juncture, and conveys a sense of letdown: "Rock's greatest rhetorician has become a mouther of romantic cliches." Ricks takes more pages to say less, and finally melts into baby talk: "*Lay, Lady, Lay* is a song ... that is sung by its creator with his sense not only of its sense but of the senses. And from the very first chords and words, it is clear that the woman addressed is not being dressed down. She is being invited. Invited to swoon, as the music with its voice swoons and croons or even cwoons." Cwoons? "It is this patience that is the calmly reassuring air of the song. No hurry. No flurry. No need to scurry." One gets the point.

Shortchanging biography and chronology to paw over Dylan thematically, purring over fine craftsmanship and suggestive allusions (pun dead ahead: "one shouldn't harp on this, but allusion may itself be thought of as a stringed instrument"), Ricks ignores the larger odyssey of Dylan as seeker and seer, where his true importance lies. Bob Dylan (formerly Zimmerman—"You can call me Zimmy") is the living, wheezing summation of the bardic, self-mythologizing, blue-denim tradition of Walt Whitman. (His name is absent from Ricks's index—he's no Georg Christoph Lichtenberg.) Like bearded Walt, Dylan is American in every weary corpuscle of his democratic being, his songs rolling like a railcar through the same restless geography of insomnia and graveyard spirits as Whitman's poems and Thomas Wolfe's lunar monologues. Comparing a couple of mundane lines from Dylan's "Abandoned Love" to a Milton sonnet, or "Seven Curses" to Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, is a genteel form of abduction. And hauling in Henry James doesn't lend heft to Dylan's achievements.

Dylan need not be daisy-chained to illustrious names from the syllabus to be accorded his true scraggly greatness as an artist; his mongrel genius doesn't require an honorary pedigree. The songs in his greatest period—the post-electric trilogy of *Bringing It All Back Home*, *Highway 61 Revisited*, and *Blonde on Blonde*—are surrealist collages exploding like kaleidoscope flowers out of a rifle barrel. "Desolation Row," on *Highway 61 Revisited*, with its cameo appearances by Pound, Einstein, and Eliot, leads to the modernist graveyard of the *Sgt. Pepper* cover. In 1974, Dylan recorded his most confessional album, *Blood on the Tracks*, in which he bared the lacerations left by the breakup of his marriage. In *Behind the Shades*, one of the smartest and sanest critical biographies of Dylan, Clinton Heylin tacks down what made Dylan's soul-baring so musically momentous:

> With this album, the man shifted axis. Ten years after he turned the rock & roll brand of pop into rock, a self-conscious, albeit populist art form, he renewed its legitimacy as a form capable of containing the work of a mature artist. He also gave it a new self-consciousness, just as the linchpins of first-generation rock were coming to the ends of their respective streaks of inspiration. The Rolling Stones would never top their four albums from *Beggars Banquet* through *Exile on Main Street*, 1968 through 1972; neither Lennon nor McCartney would come close to the quality of *Revolver*, *The White Album*, or *Abbey Road*; Pete Townshend was rock-operated out after 1973's *Quadrophenia*; even David Bowie had concluded his early seventies trilogy of consecutive rock classics.
>
> Only Dylan, whose mid-1960s canon was more daunting than all of the above, succeeded in producing an album that stoked up his genius quotient nearly ten years after he was thought to have left it by the roadside.

(The thirtieth anniversary of *Blood on the Tracks* has been commemorated with the publication of Andy Gill and Kevin Odegard's book *A Simple Twist of Fate*, which documents the complicated recording history of the album for all eternity.)

SINCE 1962, WHEN HE RELEASED his eponymous debut album, Dylan has worn and shucked aside an entire repertory of musical genres and masked disguises. He has been the dust-tramping son of Woody Guthrie, a blues rocker, a romantic troubadour, a cinema-verité star (*Don't Look Back*), a bit player (mumbling in the background of Sam Peckinpah's *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*), a Salingeresque recluse, a fundamentalist scourge, and, since the 1990s, a wandering Jew on an endless maundering tour. (This summer he is doing a concert swing through minor-league ballparks.) In one of his most recent movies, the unjustly mauled *Masked and Anonymous*, Dylan was a Buster Keaton figure of stoic, deadpan poignance, an effigy of his former self set adrift in the rubble of 1960s idealism, his acoustic guitar and harkening anthems ("Blowin' in the Wind") no match for the jabber of AK-47s fired by bandit militias.

Each change in Dylan's persona is woven into his patchwork saga, and no direction he's ever taken has been dilettantish or careerist. He has made wrong moves and bad moves, but never transparent moves. Even in his appearance this year in a soft-porny Victoria's Secret ad, which had older fans reaching for their nun's rulers ("I suppose even Dylan has the right to pad his retirement account, but it's hard to defend his status as an enduring icon of moral outrage and political integrity when he's shilling for bras and panties," scolded Leslie Bennetts in the *Los Angeles Times*), he hovered with the weird, sad ethereality of a displaced soul. Four decades he has been on the public stage and yet he remains inscrutable, a cagey master of deflection. Every mysterious and deceptively straightforward maneuver that Dylan has ever made is open to interpretation, but Christopher Ricks interprets only the words on the lyric sheets and gets stuck on the flypaper, pondering minutiae: "The fourth word of the song is 'it.' Very capacious, the atom of the word 'it.' Its irreducibility is at one with its richness of suggestion."

Why has this gaga book been greeted with such a hallelujah? Partly because it gussies up the baby-boomers' nostalgia and narcissism with intellectual eminence. It ratifies and enshrines the passions of their youth; it laminates their Dylan scrapbook. Ron Rosenbaum, chief kabbalist and kibitzer of the Dylanologists, hasn't been able to pull himself down from the ceiling since it was published. "What could be better? A major Dylan moment in the culture," he trumpeted in his *New York Observer* column. "The moment: Christopher Ricks' book (*Dylan's Visions of Sin*), hailed by Jonathan Lethem in a dazzling Sunday

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Times Book Review cover story, gives Dylan's literary stature the imprimatur of the Oxford Professor of Poetry, for those who still had their doubts." Imagine feeling grateful for an "imprimatur" bestowed like a crown of laurel.

Forty years of devotion to Dylan and you still have doubts, need validation—the teacher's nod of approval. It would be sad if it weren't so silly. The nicest thing that can be said about Christopher Ricks's book is that it means well and won't hurt anybody. It is a labor of love, beaming with benevolence, a sunrise serenade. It may even fill a crucial void in Dylan scholarship. I'm just not sure what that void is, or how this book fills it. ■

Oren Harman
The Essential Element

ENRICHING THE EARTH: FRITZ HABER, CARL BOSCH, AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF WORLD FOOD PRODUCTION
By Vaclav Smil
(MIT Press, 338 pp., $19.95)

FRITZ HABER: CHEMIST, NOBEL LAUREATE, GERMAN, JEW
By Dietrich Stoltzenberg
(Chemical Heritage Press, 326 pp., $40)

I.

NITROGEN IS COLORLESS, odorless, non-toxic, non-flammable, non-reactive. So completely inert and inconspicuous is this element that one of its discoverers, Antoine Lavoisier, named it *azote*, from the Greek meaning "without-life," a name still used in France (and in Russia) more than two hundred years after Lavoisier's head rolled into the basket beneath the Jacobin guillotine. If we were not told otherwise, we would go about our lives happily oblivious to its existence.

So thank goodness for Vaclav Smil. In a magisterial and impressively argued account of the entwined tale of man, earth, agriculture, industry, and nitrogen (that term was coined by Jean Antoine Claude Chaptal in 1790), Smil does much to dispel the old adage "out of sight, out of mind." Present as it is in plant chlorophyll, in DNA and RNA, and in amino acids, nitrogen is crucial for photosynthesis, the biosphere's most important conversion of energy; for the storage and the processing of genetic information; for assembling proteins, from which all living bodies are built, and enzymes, which control the chemistry of the living world. Nitrogen is the nutrient that is responsible for the growth of plants and for the size and protein content of cereal grains, the staples of mankind. Since humans must ingest ten complete pre-formed essential amino acids in order to synthesize the body proteins needed for tissue growth and maintenance, and since nine-tenths of those essential amino acids are provided by agricultural crops—directly in staple cereal and legume grains, indirectly in animal foods—the amount of nitrogen in soil readily available for plant uptake is a crucial quantity.

Justus von Liebig understood this when he formalized his "law of the minimum" back in 1840: plant growth is limited by the amount of the scarcest nutrient in the soil, regardless of whether other elements are abundant. Since population growth is limited by the number of people per hectare that arable land can sustain, and since nitrogen is invariably the element present in the least adequate amount in the soil, nitrogen thus becomes the limiting factor of population growth. The problem is that although nitrogen constitutes almost 80 percent of the atmosphere's volume, it is highly scarce in usable forms here on earth. Non-reactive atmospheric N_2 must first be split into its constituent atoms before uptake can occur. The history of agriculture is therefore really a story about trying to find ways to provide soil with increased nitrogen inputs.

Lightning can split N_2, but only into miniscule, unrecoverable amounts. About a hundred bacterial genera, most notably the bacteria *Rhizobium*, associated with the roots of leguminous plants, can do so—that is, fix nitrogen—too. As man's ability to manipulate bio-fixation grew through cultivating leguminous plants on the one hand and recycling organic matter (the principle reservoir of naturally accumulated nitrogen) on the other, so did his numbers. The adoption of improved methods of crop rotation, including legumes, and intensive manuring, consisting in man's ever-increasing sophistication in the manipulation of the nitrogen cycle, spurred the average yearly world population growth rate from 0.09 percent between 3,000 and 500 B.C.E. to 0.18 percent from 500 B.C.E. until the time of the Napoleonic expansion. By the 1850s, the yields from the best English and Dutch wheat fields were three times as high as the average medieval harvests.

Little wonder that astute commentators were prompted to compare agricultural innovations such as the Norfolk cycle of rotation (wheat-turnips-barley-clover) to steam power in terms of importance for and impact on the economic development of Europe. The age of industrialization would have been impossible without population growth, and nitrogen nutrient allowed not only for higher population density per hectare of arable land, but also for a slow and steady improvement in average diets. There would be serious trouble if agricultural yields would no longer be able to sustain population growth rates—but we are running ahead of our story.

II.

SIEGFRIED HABER WAS ONE OF the first Jews elected town councilor in the Silesian town of Breslau (now Wroclaw). A proud patrician and patriot, he named his firstborn son after the legendary Old Fritz, a founder of the royal house of Hohenzollern. Baby Fritz's mother died three weeks later, at the end of December, 1868. By 1876 Siegfried had remarried, and his wholesale business in natural dyes, paints, lacquers, and chemicals helped to secure a comfortable middle-class burgher existence for his expanding family. By 1881, Fritz already had three

Oren Harman is a lecturer in the biology department and the humanities faculty at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and at Bar-Ilan University, and the author of THE MAN WHO INVENTED THE CHROMOSOME: A LIFE OF CYRIL DARLINGTON, *to be published by Harvard University Press in the fall.*

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new half-sisters.

This was the age of Prussia-dominated Germany, a united Reich proclaimed in Versailles after the defeat of France in the war of 1870–1871. Propelled by countless technical and scientific innovations, most notably in chemistry and electrochemistry, Germany was becoming the most powerful economy in Europe, and its social fabric was being rapidly transformed. When Fritz graduated from a classical gymnasium at eighteen, it was to Berlin and to chemistry that he turned. There he studied under August Wilhelm von Hoffmann, the leading organic chemist of the day, quickly gaining a grasp of the chemical challenges of his time.

But Haber did not neglect his other love, which was philosophy. In Berlin, he was taught by Wilhelm Dilthey, who was at that time trying to formalize a distinction between the human sciences and the natural sciences. How was the study of history, of man and his psychology, different from the study of the cosmos—of physics, biology, chemistry, and other natural phenomena? Dilthey answered with his famous distinction between explanation (*Erklärung*) and understanding (*Verstehen*). The first of those methods consists in accounting for observed facts in terms of factors whose number and nature is determined not by descriptive analysis of the observed facts, but by the requirements of a methodological assumption. This was the way to study natural phenomena, because the real causal factors at work in nature do not make themselves available to sense-perception. In the human studies, by contrast, mental facts and their relations and interactions are consciously lived through and perceived. Understanding is always of the individual or the type, not of a general law or principle; it is personal and immediate, and so it is filtered through the cloudy, imperfect chamber of individual perception.

Haber continued his chemical studies, spending a summer under Robert Bunsen in Heidelberg, where, incidentally, he was challenged on a point of honor to a duel in which he received a sword flash in the face—a mark befitting a student of the times, and even more of a tribute for an assimilated Jew. Following a year of voluntary service, as required by law, and a rapid succession of jobs in a distillery in Breslau, a soda factory near Krakow, and a cellulose plant in the foothills of the Riesengebirge, Haber was back in Berlin, studying under Carl Liebermann, whose synthesis of alizarin had been a boon to the German dye industry. In 1891, he sat for his doctoral exams. The chemists and the physicists grilled him on the science side, finding him adequate but not terribly brilliant. Dilthey was the philosophy examiner, and from him Haber received his highest mark. Shortly after securing an assistantship at the University of Jena, Haber converted to Protestantism. He was baptized in Michaeliskirche in November, 1892.

Despite the Austrian emperor Joseph II's Edict on Toleration of 1782, which formally recognized Jews as fellow human beings, it was in France that the political emancipation of the Jews in Europe began in earnest. The decision of the Paris Sanhedrin convened by Napoleon in 1807 to denote the Jewish community of France as *français de confession mosaïque*, or "Frenchmen of the Mosaic religion," was a true reflection of the sentiments of the Jews in that country. Immediately following the decision of the National Assembly to grant emancipation to the Jews, a leading Jewish figure of the community sent an open letter to his co-religionists declaring that "France is our land of Israel, her mountains our Zion, her rivers our Jordan." But the enthusiasm was misplaced. In reality, emancipation was an empty husk, adopted by the followers of liberal France as a requisite of the new liberal ethos of nations, somewhat (as the Zionist leader Max Nordau would later claim) like the requisite piano in the salon of a proper bourgeois family. Following political emancipation, European society determined that none of its classes were prepared to grant the Jews social equality: only exceptions from the Jewish people would be received. "It was the fix of the consciously socially mobile Jew," Hannah Arendt later observed, "that to be accepted he had to be a Jew who was unlike the Jews."

When Jewish emancipation was forced upon the vanquished Prussians by Napoleon, it became clear that it would liberate not only the educated Jews, but also their backward brethren. This equality would wipe out the distinction of the exceptional Jews, the very distinction upon which their social status (as they well knew) was based. Most assimilated Jews escaped through conversion, finding it bearable to be Jewish before emancipation but not after. So it was that the Marx family was baptized in 1824, when young Karl was six years old. And so it was that Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy became the foremost composer of Christian religious music, a contemporary wit calling his conversion "the most Jewish thing Felix ever did." By the middle of the century, only four of the fifty-six descendants of the great Jewish Enlightenment philosopher Moses Mendelssohn were still Jews.

Toward the latter half of the century, the more the Jews came to resemble the Germans, the more the Germans resented them. "Anti-Semitism," a word coined by the pamphleteer Wilhelm Marr in 1879, now drew on phrenology and contemporary race science, becoming a matter of "scientific investigation" rather than religion and other outdated prejudices unsuitable for modern times. When in the 1880s the recession ended and living standards rose, anti-Semitism ebbed, and assimilated or converted Jews such as Fritz Haber fastened a hopeful and genuine embrace on their Germanness. As with many others before him, Haber's conversion was purely pragmatic. Like them, he believed that a common culture and a single nation would forever trump a distinct religious origin. Haber, weaned on Fichte's teachings of duty to the state, would do all he could for his beloved fatherland. This was to be his tragedy.

III.

Meanwhile, the quest for nitrogen fertilizers continued. Guano (solidified bird excrement from subtropical islands); sodium nitrate ($NaNO_3$) principally from the Atacama Desert in Chile; the recovery of by-product ammonia from the coking of coal; the high temperature synthesis of cyanamide ($CaCN_2$); and the fixation of atmospheric N_2 by electrical discharge, an idea more than a century old given new possibilities by the availability of relatively cheap electricity from large hydrostations: all served as more or less effective solutions. But the rising demand for food was accompanied by diminishing opportunities for extending the area of land under staple grain cultivation. As Smil notes,

> The challenge of finding a reliable, long-term source of fixed nitrogen appeared particularly acute in the United Kingdom and in Germany: besides being ... the two largest

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importers of Chilean nitrates as well as the world's largest producers of by-product ammonia, they had already put virtually all of their arable land into relatively intensive production, and in spite of their fairly high wheat yields they were also already large grain importers.

By the turn of the century, there were 1.635 billion people in the world, one-third of them in industrialized countries, and the average yearly rate of growth over the past century had risen precipitously to 0.5 percent. The English chemist and physicist William Crookes put it plainly in 1898: "Our wheat-producing soil is totally unequal to the strain put upon it.... All civilized nations stand in deadly peril of not having enough to eat."

Higher yields would require higher nutrient inputs, but the quantities of nitrogen recovered in ammonia from coking ovens were small, green manuring had a limited potential in intensive farming, and electrical discharge was proving prohibitively expensive. When Anglo-German antagonism increased as a consequence of the Boer War, some in Germany, among them the famous scientist Wilhelm Ostwald, realized that a military clash with the superior British navy would cut off nitrate imports from Chile and deprive Germany of the nitrogen needed for food and for explosives. Germany was in desperate need of nitrogenous salvation.

Enter Fritz Haber. By this time a full professor of chemistry and electrochemistry at the Technische Hochschule in Karlsruhe, Haber followed up the leads of the great physical chemist Walther Nernst and Ostwald himself, and with the help of Gabriel van Oordt and Robert Le Rossignol he made a brilliant discovery in his laboratory. Following a number of years of trials, paid for by Badische Anilin- & Soda-Fabrik (BASF), Germany's and the world's largest chemical enterprise, he finally struck the magic chord: ammonia (NH_3) could be synthesized from its elements in the presence of a catalyst at elevated temperature and atmospheric pressure. Haber had figured out how to fix nitrogen from its inexhaustible supply in the air! The implications, commercial and national, were staggering.

Necessity had played its ancient role as the mother of invention; now the process had to be industrialized if real rewards were to follow. Between 1909 and 1911, Haber patented three crucial inventions having to do with the circulation of ammonia, its pressurization, and the catalyst with which it reacts. The challenge now became to scale up Haber's experimental laboratory converter—a pressurized tube only 75 centimeters tall and 13 centimeters in diameter—into a pilot plant device that would withstand the required high pressure and high temperature, fill it with an effective, economically viable catalyst, and ensure ready and cheap supplies of the two reactant gases. Amazingly, under the guiding hand of Carl Bosch at BASF, within four short years the seventy-five-centimeter converter producing one hundred grams of NH_3 per hour had been scaled up to an eight-meter converter churning out two hundred kilograms of liquid ammonia per hour. A massive ammonia plant was constructed in Oppau. Never before or since have academic science and industry cooperated in a manner so fundamentally influential, indeed transformative, for mankind. Then the Great War broke out, and everything changed.

"WERE IT NOT FOR German militarism, German civilization would long since have been extirpated.... The German army and the German people are one." Such was the message of the manifesto *To the Civilized World*, signed in October, 1914 by ninety-three scientists, including Paul Ehrlich, Emil Fischer, Wilhelm Ostwald, Walther Nernst, Richard Willstätter, and Fritz Haber. Unlike Albert Einstein, whose pacifist proclamation attracted only three signatures more than his own, these men were utterly convinced that Germany bore no responsibility for the war, and they eagerly harnessed themselves to the great calling of the defense of the fatherland.

Some years earlier, the wealthy industrialist Leopold Koppel had given the money for a new Institute for Physical Chemistry and Electrochemistry, one of three institutes constituting the newly established Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft in Berlin-Dahlem. A converted Jew, Koppel offered the funds on condition that he could appoint the institute's director, and, moving to Berlin in 1911, Haber immediately became a member of an emerging elite of science managers. When hostilities began, his institute became integrated into the German war effort, and Haber himself was put in charge of the chemistry section in the Ministry of War. BASF now shifted to converting its ammonia output into nitrates for explosives.

This was a natural partnership for the world's greatest chemical company and the Second Reich, and it signaled the way to the rise of that awesome twentieth-century invention: the military-industrial complex. When Oppau's output proved insufficient, a second, larger plant was built at Leuna, pumping out well over one hundred thousand tons of nitrogen per year. The incredible success of both plants together undoubtedly delayed the Second Reich's collapse, perhaps by as much as two years. The "Haber Office" had acted as the military-industry link.

HABER'S DIRECT BOSS AT THE Ministry of War was Walther Rathenau, a wealthy economist, businessman, and German patriot—and a Jew. It was a worried Rathenau who persuaded General Erich von Falkenhayn, the German chief of staff, to create the Board of Wartime Raw Materials, of which he was head and of which Haber's chemistry section was a part. Nitrates, rubber, oil, metals: all of German industry would have to be efficiently mobilized to secure Germany's victory. But this would not be enough. Ever the patriotic zealot, Haber now approached his superiors with an idea of his own. His idea was that Germany should develop chemical weapons for use against its enemies.

Haber became obsessively concentrated on the task. His institute was completely re-organized to work on the development and the production of gas weapons, as well as the defensive measures that such weapons would require. Everything else, including Haber's wife and child, was pushed aside. His visits to the lines, on both the western and eastern fronts, were frequent. Research and production pushed ahead. Finally, on April 22, 1915 at 6 p.m., just as the wind turned to west-northwest, the first gas attack in military history, at Ypres in Belgium, began. German troops released 168 tons of chlorine from more than five thousand steel canisters that Haber had designed.

By the end of battle, there were fifteen thousand French wounded and five thousand dead. Haber was promoted to captain, and within a week he was again

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back in Berlin, getting ready to travel to the eastern front to launch the first gas attacks there. He was awarded the Iron Cross Class II in 1916, and the Class I followed a year later. By the war's end, the casualties of chemical warfare had amounted to 1.3 million people. One of those victims may have been Clara Haber, Fritz's wife, who just a fortnight after the attack at Ypres shot herself in the heart with her husband's revolver while he was away at the front.

How, as Haber's friend Albert Einstein asked, can one explain the vanity and the monstrosity to which "this otherwise splendid man had succumbed"? Dietrich Stoltzenberg, a retired industrial chemist, is the author of a much-needed and fine new biography of Haber. He is also the son of Hugo Stoltzenberg, one of Haber's chief collaborators on chemical warfare planning during, and after, the war. His efforts to explain Haber's actions are all the more laudable because they undoubtedly represent also a genuine attempt to understand the motivations and the actions of his own father.

Immediately following Germany's defeat, the Allies placed Haber high on their list of war criminals, demanding his extradition. Haber grew a beard and escaped to Switzerland in 1919, but he was back in public life in time to receive the Nobel Prize in 1920—the ninth for German chemists between 1901 and 1920. There was a great outcry in France, Britain, and the United States against the Swedish Academy's choice. The Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 forbade the use of chemical gases in war, and Haber was nothing other than "the inventor of gas war." Haber did not seem to be perturbed. Defending his actions before a parliamentary committee back home, he argued that if chemical weapons could be decisive in ending the war, they should be used. They were no more gruesome than any other weapon of death.

Haber believed that in times of peace scientists belong to the world, but in times of war they belong to their country. Still, duty to humanity and duty to one's country were not, in Haber's mind, as much at odds as might seem. Stoltzenberg cites this passage from Michael Balfour's biography of Kaiser Wilhelm II to describe this eerie *Weltanschauung*:

> Insofar as men had hitherto looked beyond their own country, they had mostly taken the coincidence of these two duties for granted.... To suspect that the ends of one's national community are at variance with the good of mankind is productive of so much indignation to the average individual and of so much agony to the sensitive one to make it infinitely tempting to assume that the two objectives coincide and that, in serving the nation to one's best ability, one is also serving humanity.

Faith in nationalism and faith in humanity were two sides of the same coin: this was truly a German creed. Consequently, the parliamentary committee accepted Haber's case, and offered complete exoneration for his actions on behalf of Germany during the war. "It is easy to condemn a person," Stoltzenberg tells us; "it is much harder to make a fair judgment."

Stoltzenberg adequately captures Haber's conflicts of duty, but his understanding of his subject's psyche would have been enriched by a more substantial consideration of his background. Having mentioned them in the beginning of his book, Stoltzenberg is not reminded of Haber's Jewish origins until Haber is reminded of them—with the rise of Hitler. Yet an important key for unlocking the meaning of Haber's actions and beliefs may be found in his beginnings. Haber may have won the Nobel Prize for his discovery of a method to fix nitrogen, but as Alfred Wiener quipped at the time, "if there were a Nobel Prize for German sentiment, the Jews would win it." Haber was the product of his tortured upbringing. Assimilated or converted men such as himself, and his fellow Nobelist and friend Richard Willstätter, and Rathenau, had to be more German than the Germans. When Erich Maria Remarque, the exiled author of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, was asked in the 1930s whether he missed Germany, he answered: "Why should I? I'm not Jewish."

Ultimately it would become clear that German-Jewish patriotic sentiment was a grand displacement of courtship. German Jews exercised their patriotism by excelling in the arts, sciences, industry, and politics—in abstract or public callings. When it came to more personal matters, assimilated and converted Jews invariably married and befriended each other. The great project of true and decent integration was never fulfilled. Rathenau learned this lesson when it was too late: in 1922, when he was Germany's foreign minister, he was shot dead by a member of the clandestine right-wing and anti-Semitic terror gang Consul. The assassination perfectly illustrated the crisis of German-Jewish assimilation. Haber was still a war hero at the time, a leading science administrator whose institute, among other things, was successfully developing gases such as zyklon for massive campaigns of pest control. His personal tragedy had yet to come.

IV.

THEN, IN A MONSTROUS OCCURrence often (to borrow Dilthey's terms) understood but never really explained, the Nazis rose to power. Two months later, on April 6, 1933, Einstein mounted a public attack on the new regime, mentioning the cruelties to the Jews and calling for a "moral intervention" against

Cold Calls

If you had watched my father,
who had been peddling boxes for 50 years,
working the phones again at a common desk,

if you had listened to him sweet-talking
the newly minted Assistant Buyer at Seagrams

and swearing a little under his breath,

if you had sweated with him on the docks
of a medical supply company
and heard him boasting, as I did,
that he had to kiss some strange asses,

if you had seen him dying out there,

then you would understand why I stood
at his grave on those wintry afternoons
and stared at the bare muddy trees

and raved in silence to no one,
to his name carved into a granite slab...

Cold calls, dead accounts.

EDWARD HIRSCH

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the "excesses of Hitlerism." After considerable controversy, he was expelled from the Prussian Academy of Sciences. Though tormented by his growing conflicts about his duties ("I have the feeling of having made serious mistakes in my life," he wrote to Willstätter), Haber nevertheless agreed with the decision to expel Einstein, writing to Einstein in May to explain why. This was especially remarkable because on April 7, a day after Einstein's dismissal, a new law—the Law for the Restoration of Professional Civil Service—was passed, making it illegal to employ workers of "non-Aryan descent." Haber was exempt from the law because of his war efforts, but he soon understood that he, too, would have to go. On April 30, he handed in his letter of resignation, but in true German fashion he asked to be allowed to remain in order to oversee the transition to his predecessor, and to carry out the firing of personnel himself. It was his duty.

It was also his tragedy. "His patriotism, his wartime work for the army, his service 'beyond all measure,' his early conversion to Protestantism, his devotion to his country—all made no difference," writes Smil. "In 1933 he was just another Jew in Germany." The linden tree planted on the grounds of the Institute to commemorate his sixtieth birthday five years earlier was now duly uprooted. And in May Einstein wrote to Haber sympathetically: "I can imagine your inner conflicts. It is similar to having to give up a theory that one has worked on all one's life. It is not so for me, because I never for a moment believed in them."

Einstein had always maintained that if the two men's theories proved right, then Germans would hail them as heroes and the French would say they were citizens of the world, but that if they were proved wrong, then Germans would damn them as Jews and the French as filthy Germans. To a friend Haber now wrote simply, "I have lived too long." But all was not lost. German Jews, who had until now come in minuscule numbers to Palestine, were beginning to change their minds about their prospects in the Levant. The famous "third-person" Zionism of German Jews—one man collecting money from a second man in order to send a third man to Palestine—was now rapidly, though not rapidly enough, becoming a first-person affair.

The Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann, who was himself a distinguished chemist, now turned to Haber with an offer to come to the new Sieff Institute at Rehovot. (Its name was changed to the Weizmann Institute after Weizmann's death, as president of Israel, in 1952.) Following a meeting between the two men in Zermatt in 1933, Haber wrote to Weizmann:

> Dr. Weizmann, I was one of the mightiest men in Germany. I was more than a great army commander, more than a captain of industry. I was the founder of industries; my work was essential for the economic and military expansion of Germany. All doors were open for me. But the position I occupied then, glamorous as it may have seemed, is as nothing compared with yours. You are not creating out of plenty—you are creating out of nothing, in a land which lacks everything; you are trying to restore a derelict people to a sense of dignity.... At the end of my life I find myself a bankrupt. When I am gone and forgotten, your work will stand, a shining monument, in the long history of our people.

And to Einstein, Haber exclaimed: "I was never in my life as Jewish as now." In a further letter to Weizmann, the Protestant convert and German patriot now sealed his complete about-face: "I have known the wartime battlefields on which French and English Jews shot German Jews, just as French and English socialists shot German Social Democrats, and that has left behind a stain that is painful to bear." But it was already too late. Weakened by events, Haber's chronically nervous constitution was broken. He fell ill in, of all places, Basel, where Herzl had convened the First Zionist Congress in 1897, in which only sixteen of the 207 delegates came from Germany. Haber died there in exile on January 29, 1934, broken-hearted, pining for Zion.

V.

TODAY THERE ARE SIX BILLION people on the earth. Thanks to modern medicine, but also in no small measure to an enormous expansion in the use of nitrogen fertilizers, the average yearly growth rate for the twentieth century has been a whopping 1.3 percent. According to Smil's calculations, roughly 40 percent of the world's dietary protein supply in the mid-1990s originated in the Haber-Bosch synthesis of ammonia. Protein supply is still a challenge in developing countries, and some 2.2 billion people, or roughly 40 percent of the world's total 1996 population, directly depend for their survival on the Haber-Bosch method of synthesis. Pre-fertilizer farming could provide today's average diets to only about 40 percent of the existing population. In a very literal sense, without Haber's invention, half the people alive today could not have been born.

The global dependence on the Haber-Bosch synthesis will continue to grow, largely due to the fact that one-third of the growth in the world's population in the next fifty years will occur in Africa. According to the United Nations' long-term population projection, virtually the entire increase of three billion people forecast for 2000–2050 will occur in today's low-income countries. In the twentieth century, population grew by a factor of 3.7, but global harvest expanded seven-fold. Malthus was wrong. While it is true that never before have so many people enjoyed such an abundance of food supply, it is also clear that malnutrition is caused by unequal access to food rather than by absolute supply shortages. Suffering is the result of political failures, not of the laws of nature.

Nor can we remain oblivious to the ill effects of excess nitrogen here on earth, and of nitrogen loss to the biosphere, as we continue to meddle with the natural cycle of this abundant element. While our species may be approaching the ceiling of its population growth, there is also a global trend of increased meat consumption. This means more excess nitrogen, which may be harmful to human health and disrupts aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. Into the future, better agronomic practices, such as the use of transgenic plants, may help to stem the tide, but they will not suffice. Ultimately, rational diets and stabilized populations—which will require serious planning and direction—must come to the rescue. To solve these problems, we will have to control our behavior as well as tax our brains.

In the end, Fritz Haber stands as a testament to his professor's teachings. Perhaps he imbibed Dilthey's philosophy a little too well. Colorless, odorless, nontoxic, and non-reactive, nitrogen is indeed not readily available to sense-perception. Yet Haber successfully achieved the kind of explanation of a general form that allowed him to make a discovery that is nothing short of a cornerstone of modern civilization. Billions of people live, cry,

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and rejoice because of him. But understanding his own history and his own life turned out to be much more difficult. Ludwig Jacobowski's novel *Werther the Jew*, written in 1892, is the story of a man who dies of unrequited love for Germany. It could have been written about Fritz Haber. How to explain one man's tragedy against the tragedy of millions in war and the blessing of billions forevermore? ■

CORRESPONDENCE

Continued from page 4

science. Unlike Irving Kristol, Glazer's fellow editor of *The Public Interest*, neither man allowed frustrations with the discipline to metastasize into a broadstroke rejection of social science. Instead, they prodded social science to measure human behavior more accurately. When Kristol and others leveled their criticisms of the New Class, however, they often became irrational enemies of social science and social scientists. As I quoted Kristol's description of these experts: "Though they continue to speak the language of 'progressive reform,' in actuality they are acting on a hidden agenda: to propel the nation from that modified version of capitalism we call 'the welfare state' toward an economic system so stringently regulated in detail as to fulfill many of the anticapitalist aspirations of the left." Unfortunately, this view acquired a broad following on the right.

WHAT'S FAIR

THE NOTEBOOK SECTION'S TREATment of *Women's eNews* is inaccurate and unfair ("Chronicle of Misguided Philanthropy," July 5 & 12). Of course, we can and seek always to do better, but the column's premise—that *Women's eNews* endorses the views of the sources we quote—is absurd. *Women's eNews* is a prizewinning nonprofit daily news service. It is the definitive source of substantive news—unavailable anywhere else—covering issues of particular concern to women. Among more than 2,000 news stories, just one last year quoted widows of men who killed themselves and others in the name of Hezbollah. Far from extolling the widows or the actions of their husbands, our reporter simply cited what the widows had to say. It was an interesting, albeit disturbing, story quoting women whose voices we rarely hear. And it is an important story, if only to understand the strength that Hezbollah wields in the Middle East. *Women's eNews* has a strong roster of supporters, but our content is neither dictated by—nor necessarily reflects—their views. Our editors seek a variety of stories (some controversial), just as do the editors of THE NEW REPUBLIC. That is the job of a free press in a free society.

RITA HENLEY JENSEN
Editor-in-Chief
Women's eNews
New York, New York

YOUR NOTEBOOK ITEM ATTACKS the Rockefeller Family Fund and the Teresa and H. John Heinz III Foundation for supporting *Women's eNews*. A better title for the piece would have been "Chronicle of Misreporting." The Family Fund made a one-year grant in 2002 to *Women's eNews* in its first year of operation for a specific purpose: to enable coverage of domestic economic issues important to women. Women employees from McDonald's to Microsoft have, for the last several decades, faced issues of unequal pay, inadequate child care, and deliberate or practical exclusion from many rungs of the corporate ladder. The mainstream media has failed to adequately cover how these and other critical issues diminish women's earning capacities and career satisfaction. I find the uncritical treatment given to Hezbollah in the *eNews* piece to be offensive. But that does not excuse inaccurate reporting. No one from TNR ever contacted the Family Fund to learn about this grant. Blaming the Family Fund for an unrelated grant made two years ago may serve the desire of the Notebook item to attack Teresa Heinz Kerry and whatever philanthropy is standing in her vicinity, but it is lousy reporting.

LEE WASSERMAN
Director
Rockefeller Family Fund
New York, New York

THE NOTEBOOK ITEM ABOUT *Women's eNews* could only have been written by someone who is not a reader of this admirable feminist news service. You read "vague anti-Israel politics" into the fact that, in addition to English, the service is available only in Arabic. The Arabic site was started for the very reason that the Arab world desperately needs an alternative media and that women in Arabic-speaking countries most desperately need an outlet that cares about them. You then write about an article "in praise of the widows of Hezbollah 'martyrs.' " This is laughable. The article notes that Hezbollah "is listed as a terrorist organization by the Pentagon" and includes not a single word of praise. Indeed, any reader of this article would come away shocked at how the wives of those who die fighting Israel promote death for their children as well. Finally, I think it's outrageous to say that the site "idolizes death and terrorism." When they cover the Middle East, it's often about peace activists! I read *Women's eNews* articles every day, and you can rest assured I'd be alarmed if it were anti-Israel. For those of us who care about feminist issues and who know how rarely they receive attention in the mainstream press, the site has been a wonderful addition to the scene.

SARAH BLUSTAIN
Alexandria, Virginia

THE EDITORS RESPOND:
The editor of *Women's eNews* pretends that her business is "simply" "quoting women whose voices we rarely hear." Alas, Muslim women who are ready, even eager, to have their husbands and children be martyrs are not at all rare, as any even casual reader of the newspapers can attest. What was unusual about the website's coverage of Hezbollah widows was, in fact, its quotidian quality. But Rita Henley Jensen also takes refuge in her obligation to print "controversial" stories. She cannot have it both ways. It was either a simple dispatch or it was contentious. It could not be both. At least the director of the Rockefeller Family Fund found "the uncritical treatment given to Hezbollah . . . to be offensive." Lee Wasserman should register his complaint with *Women's eNews* for making it appear on the website that the Rockefeller charity is a steady and general funder rather than the donor of a specific, one-time, single-purpose grant in 2002. TNR did try to call the Fund for the City of New York, the philanthropy that receives money for *Women's eNews*, several times. But no one ever called back. ■

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FRAMINGHAM DIARIST

Old School

ON THE LAST DAY OF THE Baghdad College High School reunion, at a makeshift altar set up in the ballroom of a Sheraton in Framingham, Massachusetts, Father Thomas Regan, a Jesuit priest, said Mass. The 100 or so Iraqis in attendance were all graduates of B.C. High—an elite, Jesuit-run prep school that turned out grads from 1932 until 1969, when the Jesuits were kicked out by the newly ensconced Baath Party. After Communion, a silver-haired gentleman stood and interrupted Regan as he prepared to segue into the closing hymn. "Father!" the man shouted. "We have to sing the song!" He then proceeded to lead the room in an a cappella version of the Baghdad College fight song, which is sung to the tune of the U.S. Army song "The Caissons Go Rolling Along." ("With a shout, with a song / We will cheer the boys along / Under banners of Gold and Maroon.") No one had forgotten the words, and there was not a trace of irony in anyone's voice.

THIS WAS THE FIRST REUNION SINCE THE Iraq war began, and the occasion was marked by all the usual high school reunion rituals—cocktails, backslapping, gossiping, and a dinner dance. Though but 100 arrived for the weekend—mostly Iraqis who have long lived in the West—thousands of Iraqi Christians, some Muslims, and even a smattering of Jews attended B.C. High, receiving a Western-style liberal arts education in the Jesuit tradition from mostly young American priests who spoke what little Arabic they knew with a Boston accent. (The classes were conducted in English.) Iraq's new prime minister, Iyad Allawi, went there for three years (not quite making it to graduation). Allawi's rival, Ahmed Chalabi, also went to B.C. High, along with some two-thirds of the late Iraqi Governing Council—though none made it to Framingham. I was there with my father—B.C. High, class of 1958—and his four brothers, all grads themselves.

TO MY FATHER AND THE OTHER ALUMNI, B.C. High symbolizes the pre-Saddam Baghdad in which they came of age—a charged, cosmopolitan hub, thriving under the constitutional monarchy of King Faisal. The alumni all recalled a (slightly idealized) era of relative peace, progressive attitudes toward women and the West, and construction projects fueled by oil revenue. But, after Faisal's assassination in 1958 sparked a series of military coups, the country devolved into bloodshed, despair, and poverty. The failure of Arab nationalism finally crystallized in the embarrassment of the 1967 war against Israel, in which the Iraqi air force was decimated.

IN 1969, THE PRIESTS GOT CAUGHT IN THE wave of anti-American sentiment propelled by the 1967 war. Accused of spying for the United States and encouraging their successful students to leave Iraq, they were expelled. But now, the reunion was abuzz with the prospect that the Jesuits may soon return to Baghdad. For the B.C. High alumni, the Jesuits' successful homecoming would be a sign that the country is ready to leave behind the era of Saddam. It would be a small victory, but a salient one. Despite the recent bombings of Christian churches in Baghdad and Mosul—just weeks after the reunion—the Jesuits said they are determined to forge ahead. At the reunion, it seemed to me that the hope for the school and the hope for the country were inextricable.

"IT'S NOT LIKE WHAT YOU SEE ON TELEvision," those who had been back to Iraq told me. I found their relentless optimism puzzling—surely these Iraqis understand their country's precarious predicament. But it became clear listening to Father Alfred Hicks—who went to teach at B.C. High in 1961 as a 25-year-old novice priest with a thin grasp of Arabic—tell the crowd about his four trips through Iraq since the war: "The things you see that you wish you had not seen are not important—it's the little gestures that show hope conquers in the end," Hicks said. "You don't hope on a sure thing."

B.C. HIGH STILL STANDS IN A HANDsome square lined with date palms in Baghdad's Suleikh neighborhood. The state took over the school after kicking the priests out, and it continued to educate the country's elite with a recalibrated focus on preparation for the civil service. Qusay and Uday Hussein received their diplomas there in the 1970s. The Jesuit legacy looms, however: "Legally and morally, it's their school," B.C. High's current headmaster, Yaqoub Youssef, recently told the *Financial Times*.

OF COURSE, A FULLY RESTORED B.C. High is an impossibility. The dwindling number of Jesuits means that, unlike the '60s, when more than 30 priests taught and resided at the school, one, perhaps two, will return. Classes will almost certainly be taught in Arabic, likely by the same teachers currently staffing the state-run school. Then there's the matter of how kindly local Iraqis will take to a renewed Western influence. "We're going to have real problems there," said Father Clarence Burby, an Iraqi-born Jesuit who was among the last in Baghdad in 1969.

THE IRAQI ALUMNI KNOW THIS. STILL, the ideas flowed—could there also be a diplomacy school, a law school, a nursing school? Should there be another high school in Irbil? It was as if they had been given use of a lame limb and were flailing it in every direction just to see what it could do. Said Hakky, class of 1961, a Shia and the current head of the Baghdad office of the Iraqi Red Crescent, told me, "The Iraqi people need the Jesuits more than ever. It's even worse than it was in 1932," when the first Jesuits arrived inside the country's newly carved borders filled with disparate ethnic and religious groups.

IN OCTOBER, THE JESUITS PLAN TO RENT a house in Baghdad. So far, said Regan, they've received "promising" indications from Allawi that they will be welcomed in the new Iraq. It's unclear, of course, what authority, or political flexibility, Allawi's government has to adjudicate such matters. "It'll never be what it was, but that's all right," Hicks said sadly. Then he steeled himself: "The liberal arts humanize people. That's why you teach them. Iraq has been dehumanized for thirty years." And perhaps that's all the Jesuits and their former students can hope for: that a renewed Baghdad College High School will help Iraq recover a bit of its lost soul. **BRIAN HINDO**

Brian Hindo is a staff editor at BUSINESSWEEK.

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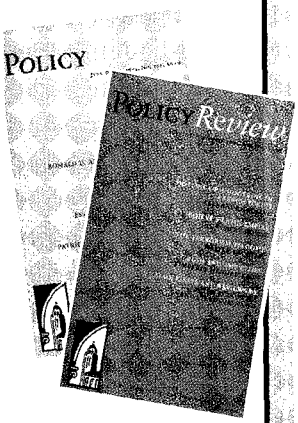

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August 25, 1945

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—Alexandre Kojève

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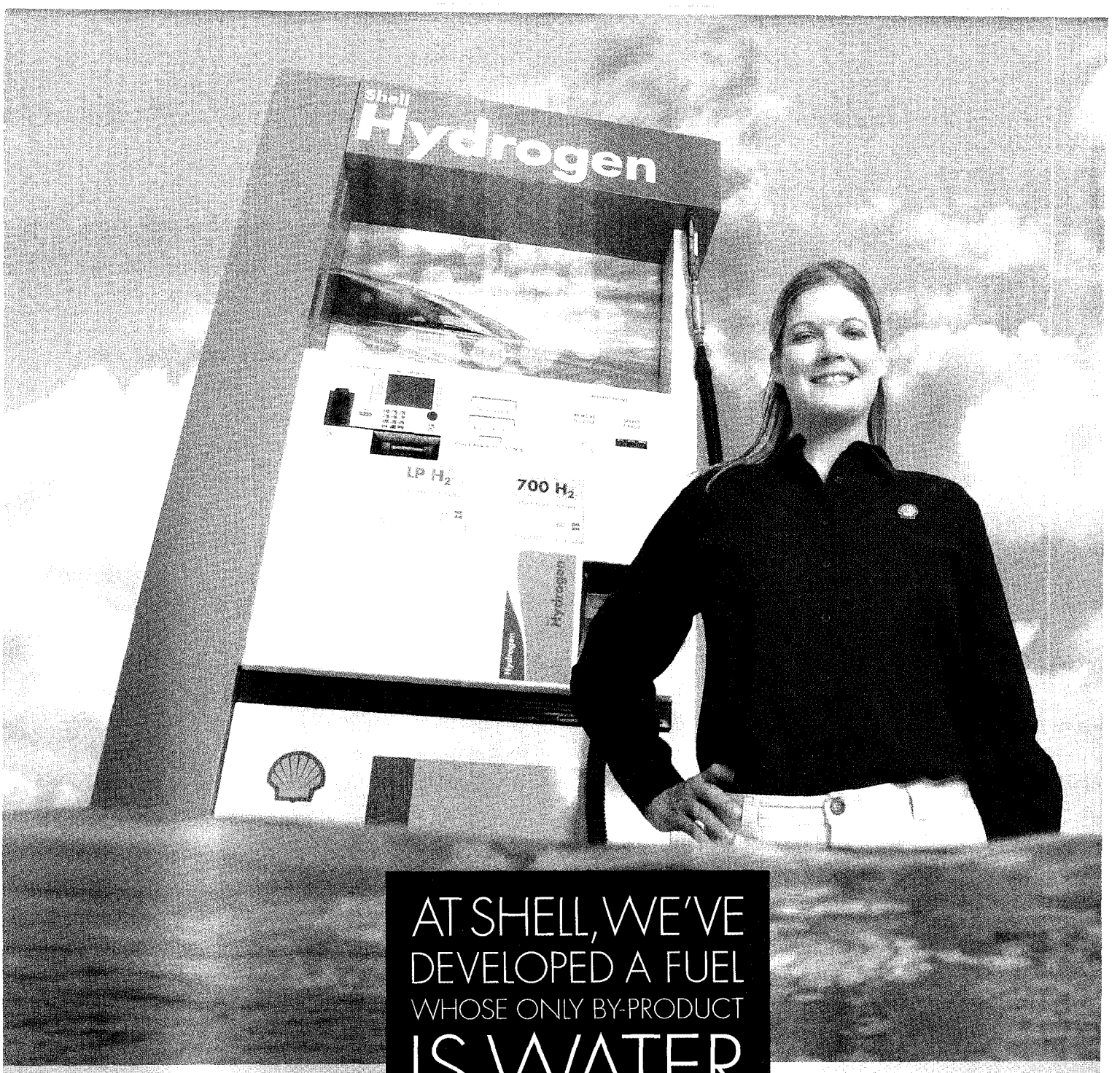

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